



ĀRYA SAṄGHATĀ SUTRA DHARMAPARYAYA



Ārya Saṅghāṭasūtra Dharmaparyāya

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Note to the Reader

The Noble Sanghāta Sutra that follows was translated into English from the Tibetan edition of this Mahayana discourse by the Buddha. Please note that in this translation, the indented parts appear as verses in the original Sanskrit and Tibetan. Please read them with the understanding that these are all the four-line verses to which the sutra refers many times.

For ease in pronouncing longer Sanskrit names, an accent mark appears on the syllable that should be stressed and words have been broken up with hyphens. This translation follows the Clay Sanskrit Library (CSL) conventions for presenting Sanskrit in English texts. For further guidance in pronouncing the Sanskrit names, as well as a list of the meanings of those names, please see www.sanghatasutra.net.

A brief history of this sutra is included on p. 109, a guide to reciting this sutra is included on p. 113, with general suggestions, as well as an extended practice from Lama Zopa Rinpoche on p. 117.

A version of this translation with explanatory footnotes is available at www.sanghatasutra.net/translations_english.html

For more information about the Sanghāta Sutra, visit www.sanghatasutra.net. This site provides a fuller guide to reading and reciting the sutra, accounts of others' experiences with this text, a discussion forum about the Sanghāta, and much more.

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The Noble Mahayana

Saṅghāta Sūtra Dharma-paryāya

In the language of India: Ārya Saṅghātasūtra Dharmaparyāya

In the language of Tibet: །འཕགས་པ་བླུང་གི་མདོའི་ཆོས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་གྲངས།

(phag pa zung gi do'i chö kyi nam drang)

Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas!

Thus I have heard at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling in Raja-griha, on Vulture's Peak, together with a great assembly of 32,000 monks, including the venerable Ajñāta-kaundīnya, the venerable Maha-maudgalyāyana, the venerable Shari-pūtra, the venerable Maha-kāshyapa, the venerable Rāhula, the venerable Bākkula, the venerable Bhadra-pāla, the venerable Bhādra-shri, the venerable Chāndana-shri, the venerable Jangūla, the venerable Subhūti, the venerable Révata, the venerable Nanda-séna and so forth; and together with 62,000 bodhisattvas, including the bodhisattva, the great being Maitréya, the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra, the bodhisattva, the great being Kumāra-shri, the bodhisattva, the great being Kumāra-vāsin, the bodhisattva, the great being Kumāra-bhādra, the bodhisattva, the great being Anūna, the bodhisattva, the great being Manjūshri, the bodhisattva, the great being Samanta-bhādra, the bodhisattva, the great being Sudārshana, the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna, the bodhisattva, the great being Vajra-séna and so forth; and together with 12,000 deva sons, including the deva son Ārjuna, the deva son Bhādra, the deva son Subhādra, the deva son Dharma-ruci, the deva son Chāndana-gārbha, the deva son Chāndana-vāsin, the deva son Chāndana and so forth; and together

with 8,000 deva daughters, including the deva daughter Mirdāmgini, the deva daughter Prasādavati, the deva daughter Mahātma-samprayūkta, the deva daughter called ‘Glorious Eye,’ the deva daughter Prajāpati-vāsini, the deva daughter Bālini, the deva daughter called ‘Glorious Wealth,’ the deva daughter Subāhu-yūkta and so forth; and together with 8,000 naga kings, including the naga king Apalāla, the naga king Elapātra, the naga king Timīngila, the naga king Kumbha-sāra, the naga king Kumbha-shīrsha, the naga king called ‘Causing Virtue,’ the naga king Sunānda, the naga king Sushākha, the naga king Gava-shīrsha and so forth.

All of them proceeded to Raja-griha, to Vulture’s Peak where the Blessed One was. When they reached there, they prostrated with their heads at the feet of the Blessed One, circumambulated the Blessed One three times, and then they all sat down in front of the Blessed One. The Blessed One assented to their presence by remaining silent.

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra arose, placed his upper robe over one shoulder, set his right knee on the ground, placed his palms together and bowed down to the Blessed One. He addressed the Blessed One as follows: “Blessed One, a million devas, a million daughters of devas and many millions of bodhisattvas have gathered. Blessed One, many millions of shrāvakas and also naga kings have gathered and are seated to hear the Dharma. That being so, may the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Perfect and Complete Buddha please teach that sort of approach into the ways of Dharma through which, as soon as they hear it, old sentient beings will purify all their karmic obstacles, and young sentient beings will make great effort at virtuous Dharma and will attain special superiority, and their virtuous actions will not degenerate, will not at all degenerate and will not become at all degenerated.”

He said this, and the Blessed One spoke thus to the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra: “Sarva-shūra, that you thought to ask the Tathāgata about this point is good, very good. Therefore, Sarva-shūra, listen well and attentively, and keep it in mind, and I will tell you.”

Having said to the Blessed One, “Just so,” the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra listened with full attention to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One spoke thus to him: “Sarva-shūra, there is a dharma-paryāya called Saṅghāta that even now is still active on this planet earth. Whoever hears this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya will have their five uninterrupted karmas purified, and they will never turn away from unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. Sarva-shūra, what do you think about this? If you think that those who hear this Saṅghāta sūtra will produce as much as the mass of merit of one tathāgata, you should not see it like that.”

Sarva-shūra said, “Well then, how should it be seen?”

The Blessed One said: “Sarva-shūra, those bodhisattvas, great beings will also produce as much a mass of merit as the masses of merit of as many tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas as grains of sand in the Ganges river. Sarva-shūra, those who hear this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya will never turn away. They will see the Tathāgata. They will never be separated from seeing the Tathāgata. They will be completely enlightened in the unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. The virtuous dharmas that they will all achieve will not be overpowered by the wicked Mara. Sarva-shūra, all those who hear this Saṅghāta sūtra will understand arising and cessation.”

Then, at that moment, all of those bodhisattvas arose, placed their upper robe over one shoulder, set their right knee on the ground, and asked of the Blessed One, “Blessed One, how much is the mass of merit of one tathāgata?”

The Blessed One spoke as follows: “Children of the lineage, listen to the measure of the mass of merit of one buddha. It is as follows: To make an analogy, as great as is the mass of merit of as many bodhisattvas abiding on the ten levels as there are drops of water in the great ocean, and particles of dust on the planet earth, and grains of sand in the Ganges river — the mass of merit of one buddha is much greater than that. As for those sentient beings who hear this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya, the mass of merit they will produce is much greater even

than that. It is not possible to realize the limit of that mass of merit by counting. Sarva-shūra, anyone who feels great joy at the time, at the moment when they hear these words will produce an immeasurable mass of merit.”

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, who are those sentient beings who thirst tremendously for the Dharma?”

After he said this, the Blessed One spoke as follows to the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra: “Sarva-shūra, there are two sentient beings who thirst tremendously for the Dharma. If you wonder which those two are, Sarva-shūra, they are as follows: One has an equal mind toward all sentient beings. The second, Sarva-shūra, is anyone who after hearing the Dharma reveals it correctly and fully to all sentient beings equally.”

The bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra said, “Blessed One, who after hearing the Dharma reveals it correctly and fully to all sentient beings equally?”

The Blessed One said: “Sarva-shūra, the first are those who, having heard the Dharma, wholly dedicate themselves to enlightenment. When one has wholly dedicated oneself to enlightenment, one thirsts tremendously for Dharma for the sake of sentient beings. Sarva-shūra, the second are those who enter into the Mahayana. They are also always tremendously thirsty for the Dharma.”

Then the millions of devas, nagas, humans and deva daughters arose, placed their palms together in front of the Blessed One and addressed the Blessed One as follows: “Blessed One, we too are tremendously thirsty for the Dharma. That being so, may the Blessed One completely fulfill our wishes and the wishes of all sentient beings.”

At that time, at that moment, the Blessed One displayed a smile.

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra arose, placed his palms together and bowed down to the Blessed One. He addressed

the Blessed One as follows: “Blessed One, what is the cause of your smile? What is the condition?”

Then the Blessed One spoke to the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra: “Sarva-shūra, those sentient beings who came here will be completely enlightened in the unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. They will attain the full establishment of the objects of enjoyment of a tathāgata.”

The bodhisattva Sarva-shūra said, “Blessed One, due to what cause and what condition will the sentient beings who came here be completely enlightened in the unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment?”

The Blessed One said: “It is good, Sarva-shūra, very good that you thought to ask the Tathāgata about this point. Therefore, Sarva-shūra, listen to the distinctive qualities of dedication:

“Sarva-shūra, at a time long past, countless eons ago, a tathāgata, an arhat, a perfect and complete buddha named Rātna-shri, endowed with knowledge and good conduct, gone to bliss, knower of the world, unsurpassed guide of beings to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, a buddha, a blessed one, arose in the world.

“Sarva-shūra, at that time, at that moment, I was a brahmin youth. All those sentient beings whom I was leading to the gnosis of a Buddha at that time, at that moment, had become wild animals, and so at that time, at that moment, I made this prayer: ‘May all the wild animals who are now completely tormented by suffering be reborn in my buddha field. May I establish them all in the gnosis of a buddha.’ And all those wild animals, having heard those words, said, ‘May it be so.’ Sarva-shūra, by this root of virtue these sentient beings have come here and will be completely enlightened in the unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment.”

Thereupon, after hearing this greatly joyful thing from the Buddha, the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra said to the Blessed One,

“Blessed One, what lifespan is possible for those sentient beings?”

The Blessed One said, “A lifespan of eighty eons is possible for those sentient beings.”

The bodhisattva Sarva-shūra said, “Blessed One, how much is the measure of an eon?”

The Blessed One said: “Child of the lineage, listen. It is as follows: To make an analogy, a man built an enclosure twelve yōjanas in circumference and three yōjanas in height, and completely filled that enclosure with nothing but sesame seeds. Then, whenever 1,000 years had passed, that man cast a single sesame seed out from that enclosure that was completely filled with sesame seeds. In such a manner, even when that man comes to the end of all those sesame seeds, and even the foundation and base of that enclosure no longer exist, still an eon would not have come to an end.

“Moreover, Sarva-shūra, it is as follows: To make an analogy, there is a mountain fifty yōjanas in depth and some twelve yōjanas in height. Then a man built a house on the side of that mountain, and for a long time, when one hundred years passed, that man would wipe it once with a cloth of Benares muslin. By his doing so, the mountain would come to an end. But even after it had, still an eon would not have come to an end. Sarva-shūra, that is the measure of an eon.”

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra arose and addressed the Blessed One, “Blessed One, if even one dedication produces a large mass of merit such that the lifespan of a happy life can become eighty eons, what need could there be to mention someone who offers an extremely great amount of reverential service to the teachings of the Tathāgata?”

The Blessed One said: “Listen, child of the lineage: If anyone who hears the Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya is able to have a lifespan of 84,000 eons, what need is there to mention one who has the Saṅghāta sūtra written out and who reads it? Sarva-shūra, that one will produce an extremely large mass of merit.

“Sarva-shūra, anyone who has a mind inspired with pure faith and makes heartfelt prostrations to the Saṅghāta sūtra will remember their past lives for ninety-five eons. They will become a wheel-turning king for sixty eons. Even in that lifetime, everyone will like them. Sarva-shūra, their death will not be brought about by weapons. Their death will not be brought about by poison. They will not be harmed by black magic. Even at their time of death, they will see ninety-nine million buddhas directly, and, Sarva-shūra, those buddhas, those blessed ones, will say to that person: ‘Holy being, because you have heard the great Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya explained well, therefore this mass of merit was created.’ And those ninety-nine million buddhas, the blessed ones, in their individual world systems will also make a prediction.

“If this is so, Sarva-shūra, what need is there to mention anyone who hears all of this great Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya, completely and extensively? Not only that, they will reassure that person, saying ‘Do not fear.’”

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, when I too listen to the great Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya, what mass of merit will I produce, Blessed One?”

The Blessed One said, “Sarva-shūra, that sentient being too will produce a mass of merit as much as the merit of the number of buddhas, tathāgatas, equaling the grains of sand in the Ganges river.”

He said, “Blessed One, when I listen to the great Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya, I can’t get enough of it.”

The Blessed One said: “Sarva-shūra, it is good, very good, that you are unable to get enough of Dharma teachings. Sarva-shūra, since I too am unable to get enough of Dharma teachings, Sarva-shūra, what need to mention that ordinary beings do not get enough?

“Sarva-shūra, any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who generates faith in the Mahayana will not go to wrong migrations for

a thousand eons. For 5,000 eons, they will not be born as an animal. For 12,000 eons, they will not be bad-minded. For 18,000 eons, they will not be born among beings in a remote region. For 20,000 eons, they will be courageous in giving. For 25,000 eons, they will be born in the world of devas. For 35,000 eons, they will engage in the practice of celibacy. For 40,000 eons, they will renounce the householder's way of life. For 50,000 eons, they will uphold the Dharma, and for 65,000 eons, they will meditate on mindfulness of death.

“Sarva-shūra, not even the slightest bad karma will occur to that son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage. The wicked maras will find no opportunity with them. They will never be born in the womb of a mother. Sarva-shūra, those who hear this dharma-paryāya, no matter where they are born, for ninety-five countless eons, will not fall into wrong realms. For 8,000 eons, they will retain what they have heard. For 1,000 eons, they will abandon killing. For 99,000 eons, they will abandon telling lies. For 13,000 eons, they will abandon divisive speech.

“Sarva-shūra, sentient beings who have heard this dharma-paryāya are rare.”

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra arose, placed his upper robe over one shoulder, set his right knee on the ground, placed his palms together and bowed down to the Blessed One. He said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, how large a mass of bad karma will those who reject this dharma-paryāya produce?”

The Blessed One said, “Sarva-shūra, it is much.”

He said, “Blessed One, how large a mass of bad karma will those sentient beings produce?”

The Blessed One said: “Be quiet, Sarva-shūra, be quiet. Do not ask me about the masses of bad karma. Sarva-shūra, compared to generating ill-will toward as many tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas as there are grains of sand in twelve Ganges rivers, those

who disparage the Saṅghāta sūtra will produce a far greater mass of non-virtue. Sarva-shūra, those who generate ill-will toward the Mahāyāna will also produce a far greater mass of non-virtue than that. Sarva-shūra, those sentient beings are burnt. They are just burnt.”

Sarva-shūra asked, “Blessed One, is it not possible to liberate these sentient beings?”

The Blessed One said: “That is so, Sarva-shūra. It is impossible to liberate them.

“Sarva-shūra, it is as follows: To make an analogy, if someone were to cut off a man’s head, if that person were to apply as a poultice to his head either honey or sugar or molasses or butter or vegetable oil, or any medicinal poultice, what do you think about this, Sarva-shūra? Would this person be able to rise up again?”

Sarva-shūra said, “Blessed One, this cannot be.”

The Blessed One said: “Moreover, Sarva-shūra, there would also be another man. When he struck another sentient being with a sharp weapon, although he was unable to kill him by striking one blow, Sarva-shūra, a wound would occur. If medicine were applied, his wound would heal. At the time when he has revived, recalling the suffering, that man would think, ‘Now I understand, and therefore at no time will I create wicked, non-virtuous karma.’ Just like the one who reflects in this way, Sarva-shūra, when that man recalls suffering, he completely abandons wickedness. At that time all the Dharma becomes manifest. When all the Dharma has become manifest, at that time he will bring to completion all the virtuous Dharma teachings.

“Sarva-shūra, it is as follows: To make an analogy, just as the parents of a man who died grieve and lament, but nevertheless have no ability to protect him, in the same way, Sarva-shūra, childish ordinary individuals are also unable to help themselves or others. Like those parents whose hopes were dashed, these sentient beings too will have their hopes dashed at the time of death.

“Sarva-shūra, there are two sentient beings whose hopes have been dashed. Who are the two? They are as follows: One is a sentient being who does wicked actions or has them done. The other is one who abandons the holy Dharma. Both these sentient beings have their hopes dashed at their time of death.”

The bodhisattva Sarva-shūra said: “Blessed One, what is the migration path of these sentient beings? What is their life afterwards?”

The Blessed One said: “Sarva-shūra, limitless are the migrations of sentient beings who disparage the holy Dharma. Limitless too are their future lives. Sarva-shūra, sentient beings who abandon the holy Dharma will experience feelings for an eon in the sentient beings’ great hell of Lamentation; for an eon in the Crushing Hell, an eon in the Hot Hell, an eon in the Extremely Hot Hell, an eon in the great hell of Black Lines, an eon in the great hell of Avīci, an eon in the great hell called Hair Rising, an eon in the great hell of Calling Out ‘Alas!’ and, Sarva-shūra, they will have to experience the sufferings of these eight great hells for eight eons.”

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra said the following to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, it is suffering. Sugata, it is suffering. Hearing of it is not joyful.”

Then the Blessed One at that time uttered these verses:

How beings in the beings’ hell
experience such sufferings —
greatly fearsome words like these
you find no joy in hearing.

For those who do virtuous actions,
goodness is what comes to pass.
For those who do non-virtuous actions,
that becomes suffering indeed.

Those who do not know happiness’ cause,
once they are born, will be tormented by death,

and by the pain of their bondage to grief.
These childish ones will always suffer.

Those who recall the Buddha as supreme,
these skillful ones indeed are happy.
Those who have faith in the Mahayana too
will not go to bad migrations.

Sarva-shūra, in just this way,
propelled by previous karma,
those who have done merely a small deed
will experience endless results.

In the buddha field, the supreme field,
if one plants a seed, great will be the fruit.
Just as many fruits are enjoyed
from planting but a few seeds,
so those who delight in the Conqueror's teachings —
these skillful ones indeed are happy.
They abandon wicked deeds
and create much virtue, too.

Anyone who gives to my teachings
an offering of even just a mere hair
will for eighty thousand eons have
great possessions and much wealth, too.

Wherever it is that they are born,
they will always be generous.
Thus, greatly fruitful is the Buddha,
a profound place for giving.

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra said to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, how should one seek out the Dharma taught by the Blessed One? Blessed One, how will one take firm hold of the roots of virtue after hearing the Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya?”

The Blessed One said, “Sarva-shūra, one should know that the mass of merit of one who listens to this Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya is just like offering reverential service to as many tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas as there are grains of sand in twelve Ganges rivers, providing them with everything required for their happiness.”

The bodhisattva Sarva-shūra said, “Blessed One, how are the roots of virtue to be brought to completion?”

He asked this, and the Blessed One said to the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra, “These roots of virtue are to be understood to be equal to a tathāgata.”

“What are these roots of virtue that are to be understood to be equal to a tathāgata?”

The Blessed One said, “An orator of the Dharma is to be understood to be equal to a tathāgata.”

Sarva-shūra said, “Blessed One, who is an orator of the Dharma?”

“Anyone who reads out the Saṅghāta sūtra is an orator of the Dharma.”

Sarva-shūra said: “Blessed One, since even those who hear the Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya will produce such a mass of merit, what need is there to mention those who write it out and read it. How much a mass of merit will they produce?”

The Blessed One said: “Sarva-shūra, listen. It is as follows: To make an analogy, in each of the four directions, as many tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas as there are grains of sand in twelve Ganges rivers could sit and teach the Dharma for twelve eons, yet even if they described the mass of merit of the one writing out this Saṅghāta sūtra, they would not be able to comprehend its end nor express it in words. If even as many buddhas, blessed ones as there are grains of sand in forty-eight Ganges rivers are unable to express the mass of merit of the one writing it out, what need is there to mention that whoever writes it out or reflects on it or reads it will become a treasury of the Dharma?”

The bodhisattva Sarva-shūra said, “Blessed One, how much will be the mass of merit of the one who reads it?”

Then at that time the Blessed One spoke these verses:

As for the virtues of those who have read
one mere stanza of four lines,
though conquerors as many as grains of sand
in eighty-four of the Ganges rivers
should describe uninterruptedly
all the merit of those who have read
this sūtra, the Saṅghāta,
still that merit would not run out.

The Dharma taught by enlightened ones
is hard to find, and limitless.

At the time and at that moment as well, eighty-four hundreds of thousands of myriad millions of devas placed their palms together and bowed down toward where the teaching of the Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya was. They said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, for whatever purpose the Blessed One deposited such a Dharma treasury on this planet earth, it is good, very good.”

Eighteen hundred thousand myriad millions of naked ascetics from other traditions arrived at the place where the Blessed One was and said to the Blessed One, “Ascetic Gāutama, sir, be victorious!”

The Blessed One said: “The Tathāgata is always victorious. Sirs, heretical nudists, how could you heretics be victorious?”

They said: “May you be victorious, Ascetic Gāutama. May you be victorious.”

The Blessed One said:

I see no victor amongst you.
If you abide in a wrong way,

how are you to be victors?
 You naked ones, listen as
 I express something to benefit you.
 To a childish mind, there is nothing pleasant.
 How are you to be victors?
 Therefore, with a Buddha-eye,
 I will teach also the profound path.

Then those naked ascetics became angry at the Blessed One and generated a mind of disbelief. At that time, at that moment, Indra, the lord of the devas, wielded his thunderbolt. At that, those eighteen million naked ascetics were overcome with fear and stricken with great suffering. They wept and their tears began to flow. The Blessed One also made his body disappear, and at that, the naked ascetics sobbed and their faces filled with tears. Not seeing the Blessed One, they spoke these verses:

There is no friend to defend us here —
 likewise no father and no mother.
 What we see is like a wilderness:
 No vacant house or place to stay.

Nor is there even water here.
 There are no trees, nor any birds.
 Here no living beings are seen.
 With no protector, we feel suffering.
 Since we do not see the Tathāgata,
 what we experience is greatly unbearable.

Then, at that time too, the eighteen million naked ascetics arose and knelt with both feet on the ground. They raised their voices and sang out:

Tathāgata, endowed with compassion,
 Complete Buddha, supreme among humans,
 please do what will benefit us.
 Be the refuge for beings in despair.

Then the Blessed One displayed a smile and said to the bodhisattva Sarva-shūra, “Sarva-shūra, go and explain the Dharma to the heretical naked ascetics from other traditions.”

He spoke thus, and the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, if the Black Mountain demolishes its boulders prostrating with its peak to Mount Suméru, the king of mountains, how am I to teach the Dharma while the Tathāgata is present?”

The Blessed One said: “Be quiet, child of the lineage. The skillful means of the buddhas are many, so go, Sarva-shūra. Look among the world systems in the ten directions and see where tathāgatas are appearing and where there are seats set up. Sarva-shūra, I myself will teach the Dharma to the heretical naked ascetics from other traditions.”

The bodhisattva Sarva-shūra said, “Blessed One, by whose supernatural power shall I go, by means of my own supernatural power or rather by the supernatural power of the Tathāgata?”

The Blessed One said: “Sarva-shūra, go by the blessing of the strength of your own supernatural power. Sarva-shūra, come back by the Tathāgata’s supernatural power.”

Then the bodhisattva Sarva-shūra arose, circumambulated the Blessed One and disappeared on that very spot.

Then the Blessed One taught the Dharma to those heretics from other traditions: “Friends, birth is suffering. Birth itself is also suffering. Once one is born, there arise many fears of suffering. From birth, fears of sickness arise. From sickness, fears of aging arise. From aging, fears of death arise.”

“Blessed One, what is it to say that ‘from birth, fear of being born will be born’?”

“From being born as a human, many fears arise. Fear of the king arises. Fear of thieves arises. Fear of fire arises. Fear of poison arises. Fear

of water arises. Fear of wind arises. Fear of whirlpools arises. Fear of the actions one has done arises.

The Blessed One taught the Dharma in many forms, such as this topic of birth, and at that time, at that moment, the heretical naked ascetics from other traditions were utterly terrified and said, “From now on, we will never again aspire to be born.”

When the Blessed One explained this Saṅghāta sūtra dharmaparyāya, the eighteen million heretical naked ascetics from other traditions fully completed the unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. From his own retinue as well, 18,000 bodhisattvas were established on the ten grounds, and they all emanated supernatural displays as well, such as the form of a horse, the form of an elephant, the form of a tiger, the form of a gāruḍa, the form of Mount Sumēru and forms like the pattern of a swastika, and some displayed the form of a tree. They all sat cross-legged on lotus thrones as well.

Nine thousand million bodhisattvas sat down to the right of the Blessed One. Nine thousand million bodhisattvas sat down to the left of the Blessed One, and the Blessed One remained in meditative equipoise the entire time, and appeared to teach the Dharma through skillful means. On the seventh day, the Blessed One stretches out the palm of his hand and knows that the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra is coming there from the Padmōttara world system. When the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra was going to the Padmōttara world system, by the blessing of the strength of his own supernatural powers, he arrived there in seven days. When the Blessed One stretched out his hand, at that time the bodhisattva Sarva-shūra was in the presence of the Blessed One. After circumambulating the Blessed One three times, his mind became inspired with pure faith in the Blessed One.

He placed his palms together, bowed down to the Blessed One, and said this to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, when I went to all the world systems of the ten directions, Blessed One, by one of my supernatural powers I saw 99,000 million buddha fields, and by two

supernatural powers, I saw a thousand million blessed ones. On the seventh day, I arrived at the Padmōttara world system, and on the way, I also saw hundreds of thousands of millions of unshakable buddha fields.

“Then, Blessed One, first I saw the supernatural displays of the buddhas, the blessed ones, and I saw tathāgatas teaching the Dharma in 92,000 million buddha fields. And on that very day, in 80,000 million buddha fields, I saw 80,000 million tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas arising in the world. After making prostrations to all those blessed ones, I went further.

“Blessed One, on that very day I passed 39,000 million buddha fields, and in those 39,000 million buddha fields, there also arose 39,000 million bodhisattvas. And on that very day, they were completely enlightened in the unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. I circumambulated those blessed ones, tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas three times, and became invisible by means of supernatural power.

“Blessed One, in sixty million buddha fields also, I saw buddhas, blessed ones. Blessed One, I made prostrations to the buddha fields and to the buddhas and continued on straightaway.

“Blessed One, in another eight million buddha fields, I saw tathāgatas producing the deed of passing into nirvana. After making prostrations to those tathāgatas as well, I continued on straightaway.

“Moreover, Blessed One, in ninety-five million buddha fields, I saw the disappearance of the holy Dharma, and, Blessed One, I became distressed and burst into tears. Moreover, I saw devas, nagas, yakshas, rākshasas and many embodied beings of the desire realm weeping, pierced with great agonizing pains. Moreover, similarly, Blessed One, after making prostrations to these buddha fields together with their oceans, with their Mount Sumérus and with their land, that were all without exception burnt, I fell into despair and left.

“Blessed One, up until I came to the Padmóttara world system, Blessed One, I saw 500,000 million thrones set up, too. One hundred thousand million thrones were set up in the southern direction. I saw 100,000 million thrones set up in the northern direction, 100,000 million thrones set up in the eastern direction, 100,000 million thrones set up in the western direction, and 100,000 million thrones set up in the upper direction. Also, Blessed One, those thrones that had been set up are made solely from the seven precious substances, and on all these thrones, too, tathāgatas are seated and teach the Dharma.

“I was amazed at those blessed ones, and so I asked those tathāgatas, ‘What is the name of this buddha world system?’ and those blessed ones said, ‘Child of the lineage, this world system is named Padmóttara.’

“Then, Blessed One, after I had circumambulated those tathāgatas, I asked the name of that buddha field’s tathāgata.

“They said, ‘The one called Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfect and Complete Buddha Padma-gārbha performs the activities of a buddha in this buddha field.’

“Then I asked this of them, ‘Since there are many hundreds of thousands of millions of buddhas, and since I do not know the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfect and Complete Buddha Padma-gārbha, which is that one?’

“That tathāgata said, ‘Child of the lineage, I will show you the one called Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfect and Complete Buddha Padma-gārbha.’

“Then the bodies of all those tathāgatas disappeared and they appeared only in the forms of bodhisattvas. A lone tathāgata was apparent, and I made prostrations with my head at the feet of that tathāgata. As soon as I went there, a throne appeared, and I went to that throne. And, Blessed One, at that time many thrones appeared, but not seeing anyone on those thrones, I said to that tathāgata, ‘Blessed One, I do not see any sentient beings at all on these thrones.’ And the Tathāgata said, ‘Sentient beings who have not produced the root of virtue do not have the power to sit on those thrones.’

“I said, ‘Blessed One, after sowing what kind of root of virtue does one come to be on those thrones?’

“That Blessed One said: ‘Listen, child of the lineage. Sentient beings who have heard the Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya by that root of virtue will sit on these thrones, and there is no need to mention those who have written it out or read it. Sarva-shūra, you have heard the Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya and therefore you are sitting on this seat. Otherwise, how would you have entered into this buddha field?’

“That Blessed One spoke thus, and I said the following to that Blessed One: ‘Blessed One, how much is the mass of merit that will be produced by those who hear the Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya?’

“Then the Blessed One, the Padma-gārbha Tathāgata, displayed a smile. I asked that Blessed One for what purpose that Blessed One displayed a smile: ‘Blessed One, what is the reason and for what sort of purpose did the Tathāgata display a smile?’

“That Blessed One said: ‘Child of the lineage, bodhisattva, great being Sarva-shūra, He Who Has Attained Great Power, listen. It is as follows: To make an analogy, someone is a wheel-turning king ruling four continents. If he plants sesame in the fields of the four continents, Sarva-shūra, what do you think about this? Would many of his seeds grow?’

Sarva-shūra said, “Blessed One, many. Sugata, many.”

The Blessed One said: “Sarva-shūra, from those sesame seeds, a sentient being would make a single pile, and some other person would take each sesame seed from that pile of sesame seeds, one by one, and place it aside. Sarva-shūra, what do you think about this? Would that sentient being be able to count those sesame seeds or make an analogy of them?”

The bodhisattva Sarva-shūra said: “Blessed One, he would not. Sugata, he would not. He would be incapable of counting those sesame seeds or making an analogy.”

“Likewise, Sarva-shūra, apart from the Tathāgata, no one else can make an analogy for the mass of merit of the Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya. Sarva-shūra, it is as follows: To make an analogy, even if as many tathāgatas as there were sesame seeds should all declare the merits of the roots of virtue from hearing the Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya, they would not come to the end of that merit, even through an analogy. That being the case, there is no need to mention one who writes it out and reads it and has it written.”

The bodhisattva Sarva-shūra said, “Blessed One, what sort of mass of merit will be produced by the one who writes it out?”

The Blessed One said: “Child of the lineage, listen. Someone cuts up all the grass or wood of a galaxy of a billion world systems to the size of a mere finger width and, Sarva-shūra, listen to a second analogy, too. If as many stones or cliffs or earth or particles of dust as there are in a galaxy of a billion world systems were to become wheel-turning kings ruling four continents, would it be possible for someone to make an analogy of their merit?”

Sarva-shūra said, “Blessed One, it would not, except for the Tathāgata.”

“Similarly, Sarva-shūra, it is impossible to make an analogy for the mass of merit of the one who writes out the Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya either. Compared to the mass of merit of that many wheel-turning kings, one who writes down even just one syllable of this dharma-paryāya and sets it up will produce a much greater mass of merit. Those wheel-turning kings are not like that, although their merit is extremely large. Sarva-shūra, likewise, the merit of a bodhisattva, a great being, who remains upholding and practicing the holy Dharma of the Mahayana cannot be overshadowed by a wheel-turning king. Likewise, an analogy cannot be made for the mass of merit of the one who writes out the Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya.

“Sarva-shūra, this Saṅghāta sūtra reveals treasuries of merit. It pacifies all that is delusional. It makes the lamp of all Dharmas blaze brightly. It defeats all the wicked maras. It makes the abodes of all

the bodhisattvas blaze brightly. It brings about the complete accomplishment of all Dharmas.”

He spoke thus, and the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra said to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, here the practice of celibacy is a very difficult practice. If one wonders what the reason for this is, Blessed One, a tathāgata’s practice is rare, and likewise the practice of celibacy is also rare. At the time when one engages in the practice of celibacy, one will see the Tathāgata directly. Day and night, one will see the Tathāgata. At the time one sees the Tathāgata directly and looks at the Tathāgata day and night, one sees the buddha field. When one sees the buddha field, one sees all the treasures. When it is one’s time to die, terror will not be born. One will not be born in a mother’s womb at all. One will not become sorrowful at all. One will not be bound by the noose of craving.”

He said this, and the Blessed One spoke thus to the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra, “Sarva-shūra, the arising of tathāgatas is rare.”

He said: “Blessed One, it is rare. Sugata, it is difficult to find.”

The Blessed One said: “Sarva-shūra, likewise this Saṅghāta sūtra dharma-paryāya is also difficult to find. Sarva-shūra, anyone whose ear this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya falls upon will recollect past lives for eighty eons. For 60,000 eons, they will attain wheel-turning kingship. For 8,000 eons, they will attain the position of Indra. For 20,000 eons, they will be born equal in fortune to the devas of the pure abodes. For 38,000 eons, they will become the great Brahma. For 99,000 eons, they will not fall down into wrong realms. For 100,000 eons, they will not be born among pretas. For 28,000 eons, they will not be born among animals. For 13,000 eons, they will not be born in the form of an āsura. Their death will not be brought about by weapons. For 25,000 eons, their wisdom will not be distorted. For 7,000 eons, they will exercise wisdom. For 9,000 eons, they will be handsome and lovely. They will be just like the form bodies accomplished by the Tathāgata.

For 16,000 eons, their body will not be stricken with illness. For 35,000 eons, they will possess the divine eye. For 19,000 eons, they will not be born in the birthplaces of nagas. For 60,000 eons, they will not be overcome by anger. For 7,000 eons, they will not be born into an impoverished household. For 80,000 eons, they will be active on two continents. Even when they become impoverished, they will obtain this sort of happiness: For 12,000 eons, they will not be born in a birthplace of a blind person. For 13,000 eons, they will not be born in bad migrations. For 11,000 eons, they will be sages propounding patience.

“Also, at the time of death, when the final consciousness ceases, they will not have incorrect perceptions. They will not be overcome by anger. In the eastern direction, they will see as many buddhas, blessed ones, as there are grains of sand in twelve Ganges rivers. In the southern direction, they will see directly twenty million buddhas. In the western direction, they will see as many buddhas, blessed ones, as there are grains of sand in twenty-five Ganges rivers. In the northern direction, they will see directly as many buddhas, blessed ones, as there are grains of sand in eighty Ganges rivers. In the upward direction, they will see directly 90,000 million buddhas, blessed ones. In the downward direction, they will see directly as many buddhas, blessed ones, as there are grains of sand in 100 million Ganges rivers, and they will all say to that child of the lineage: ‘Child of the lineage, you have heard the Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya, and therefore in future lives there will be this many good qualities, benefits and happiness. Therefore, do not be afraid.’ Saying that, they will reassure that person.

“‘O child of the lineage, have you seen many hundreds of thousands of myriad millions of tathāgatas, as many as grains of sand in Ganges rivers?’”

“He says, ‘Blessed One, I have seen them. Sugata, I have seen them.’”

“He speaks, ‘O child of the lineage, these tathāgatas have arrived to see you.’”

“He says, ‘What sort of virtuous action did I do that this many tathāgatas have arrived at the place where I am?’”

“He speaks: ‘Child of the lineage, listen. You obtained a human body, the Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya fell upon your ear, and therefore, due to that, you created this great a mass of merit.’”

He says, “Blessed One, if even my mass of merit becomes this much, what need is there to mention one who hears it comprehensively in its entirety!”

He speaks: “Be quiet, be quiet. O child of the lineage, I will describe the merit of a four-line verse, therefore listen. Child of the lineage, it is as follows: To make an analogy, even compared to the mass of merit of as many tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas as there are grains of sand in thirteen Ganges rivers, it produces a much greater mass of merit than that. Compared to one who honors as many tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas as there are grains of sand in thirteen Ganges rivers, if even one who hears just a four-line verse from this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya will produce a much greater mass of merit than that, what need is there to mention someone who hears it comprehensively in its entirety? Child of the lineage, listen to this regarding one who hears the Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya comprehensively in its entirety. If there were as many wheel-turning kings as the number of sesame seeds planted in the whole galaxy of a billion world systems, and a rich person, with much wealth and great possessions, made offerings to those wheel-turning kings, compared to that, one who makes offerings to one stream-enterer produces a much greater mass of merit. If all those sentient beings of the galaxy of a billion world systems were to become stream-enterers, compared to the mass of merit of one who makes offerings to all of them, the mass of merit produced by one who makes offerings to one once-returner would be much greater. If all those sentient beings of the galaxy of a billion world systems were once-returners, compared to the mass of merit of one who makes offerings to all of them, the mass of merit produced by one who makes offerings to one non-returner would be much greater. If all those

sentient beings of the galaxy of a billion world systems were non-returners, compared to the mass of merit of one who makes offerings to all of them, the mass of merit produced by one who makes offerings to one arhat would be much greater. If all those sentient beings of the galaxy of a billion world systems were arhats, compared to the mass of merit of one who makes offerings to all of them, the mass of merit produced by one who makes offerings to one pratyēka-buddha would be much greater. If all those sentient beings of the galaxy of a billion world systems were pratyēka-buddhas, compared to the mass of merit of one who makes offerings to all of them, the mass of merit produced by one who makes offerings to one bodhisattva would be much greater. If all those sentient beings of the galaxy of a billion world systems were bodhisattvas, compared to the mass of merit of one who makes offerings to all of them, if the mass of merit produced by one who makes their mind inspired with pure faith in one tathāgata and makes their mind inspired with trust toward a galaxy of a billion world systems completely full of tathāgatas and one who hears this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya would produce a much greater mass of merit than that, then, Sarva-shūra, what need is there to mention whoever writes out this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya or memorizes it or reads it, or who comprehends it completely! Sarva-shūra, what need is there even to mention prostrating with a mind inspired with pure faith toward this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya!

“Sarva-shūra, what do you think about this? One might wonder whether all childish ordinary individuals are able to hear this, but even if they hear it, they will not generate faith.

“Sarva-shūra, listen. Is there anyone among childish ordinary individuals who is able to get to the bottom of the great ocean?”

He said, “Blessed One, there is not.”

He said, “Is there any sentient being who could deplete the ocean with the palm of one hand?”

He said: “Blessed One, there is not. Sugata, there is not.”

He said: “Sarva-shūra, just as there is no sentient being at all able to dry up the great ocean, Sarva-shūra, nor is any sentient being of lower aspiration able to listen to this dharma-paryāya. Sarva-shūra, those who have not seen as many millions of tathāgatas as there are grains of sand in eighty Ganges rivers are unable to write out this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya. Those who have not seen as many tathāgatas as there are grains of sand in ninety Ganges rivers are unable to listen to this dharma-paryāya. Those who have not seen hundreds of thousands of myriad millions of tathāgatas, having heard this dharma-paryāya, will reject it. Sarva-shūra, those who have seen as many as 100 million tathāgatas as there are grains of sand in the Ganges river, when they hear this dharma-paryāya, will produce a mind inspired with pure faith. They will be delighted. They will understand correctly, exactly as it is. That one will have faith in this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya and will not reject it.

“Sarva-shūra, listen. Those who write out just a four-line verse from this Saṅghāta sūtra, after they pass 95,000 million world systems, their buddha field will become just like the Sukhāvati world system. Sarva-shūra, the lifespan of those sentient beings will have the capacity to be 84,000 eons.

“Sarva-shūra, listen. As for those bodhisattvas, those great beings, who hear as little as a four-line verse from this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya, Sarva-shūra, it is as follows: To make an analogy, a sentient being who has committed the five uninterrupted actions, ordered them done or rejoiced in their doing will purify the bad karma of the five uninterrupted actions if they too hear just a four-line verse from this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya. It is like that.

“Listen, Sarva-shūra, and I will explain still another good quality. It is as follows: To make an analogy, a sentient being destroyed stupas, causes a division within the Saṅgha, causes a bodhisattva to waver from their meditative absorption, creates an obstruction to the wisdom of a buddha and takes human life. Afterwards, that sentient being regrets it, and is distressed. ‘By this body, I have been ruined, and ruined in the next life, too. I am worthless.’ Thinking thus, there

arises intense contemplation and he experiences painful feelings. He experiences unbearable feelings. Sarva-shūra, that sentient being is rejected by all sentient beings. He is despised. This sentient being is burnt and worthless. He has become worthless with regard to worldly and supramundane phenomena as well. For many eons, this man will be like a log burnt to cinder. This man will be just like pillars and beams in a nicely painted house that are not beautiful once they are burnt. He is not lovely in this world, either. Wherever he goes, in all those places, sentient beings will criticize and beat him, too, and though afflicted with hunger and thirst, he will not obtain even the slightest bit to eat or drink.

“On account of that, he experiences a feeling of suffering and is reminded of the destruction of the stupas and of the five uninterrupted actions out of hunger and thirst and abuse, and having been reminded, on account of that, he thinks, ‘Where am I to go? Who is my protector?’ And he becomes depressed by the suffering, thinking, ‘Since no one at all is a protector to me here, let me go to a mountain or ravine and there put an end to my life.’

He said:

‘Since I have done wicked acts,
I’m like a cinder, forever burnt.
Both in this world not lovely
and in the next world, lovely not.

Within the house too, not lovely.
Also outside, lovely not.
Due to flaws, I did wicked deeds;
through them, to lower realms I go.

I will suffer too in other lives,
in whatever bad state I dwell.’

As he sobbed and choked on tears,
even by devas his words were heard:

‘Alas, to lower realms I go,
thus in the life beyond there is no hope.’

The devas said to him:

‘Foolish person thinking so!
Drop this suffering mind and go!

“Father killed and mother killed;
Since five heinous deeds I did,
refuge, comrade: none for me;
suffering feelings I will have.
To the mountain peak I’ll go,
my body there to cast away.”

Foolish being, do not go.
With this mind that would do harm
much wickedness was done by you.
Do not do this wicked act!

Who does harm unto themselves
to the suffering hells will go.
They will grieve and cry aloud,
and due to that, fall to the ground.

Not by that effort do buddhas come to be,
nor do bodhisattvas come about.
Even a hearer’s vehicle is not attained.
So by another effort, strive.
Go to that mountain where a sage is.’

Having gone and seen the magnanimous sage,
at his feet, he paid homage with his head.

‘Holy being, be a refuge for me!
I’m so oppressed by fears, by woes.
Essence of Beings, Sage, please hear my words!
Please sit and make an opportunity for thought.

Explain virtuous Dharma for even just an instant.
 Since I'm oppressed by terror and pain,
 Please sit just for a short while.
 Let me confess the many wicked deeds I've done.
 May the sage please speak to me.'

"The sage said:

'Weeping in sorrow and overcome with grief,
 you are afflicted by hunger and thirst,
 traveling in the three worlds, in despair.
 Therefore, eat the food I give.'

In order to satisfy the body,
 the sage gave food.

'After eating this delightful, tasty food,
 a being will feel extreme joy.
 The Dharma that purifies all wickedness
 later I will explain to you.'

Then in one instant he ate
 that delicious food of his.
 Having eaten, he washed his hands
 and circumambulated the sage.

As he sat with his legs crossed,
 whatever he'd done that was wrong, he told.

'Father killed and mother killed and
 stupa destruction I have done.
 I blocked a bodhisattva
 in his pursuit of enlightenment.'

When he heard these words of his
 the sage then spoke these words:

‘Since you have done wicked acts,
oh my, you are not virtuous.
Make a confession of the wicked acts
that you have done or ordered done.’

“At that time, at that moment, he was pierced with agonizing pains and became distressed with terror. He said to the sage:

‘Who will be my protector?
Since I have done wicked acts,
I will undergo suffering.’

“Then that man placed both knees on the ground and said to the sage:

‘All the wicked deeds I’ve done
and ordered done, I now confess.
May they not bring wicked results.
May I not experience suffering.

Let me become close to you.
Sage, please become my refuge.
Make me without regret and at peace,
and thus pacify my bad karma.’

“Then at that time, at that moment, that sage said to the man, reassuring him: ‘Being, I will be your refuge. I will be your support. I will be the friend who defends you, so listen to the Dharma in my presence without fear. Have you heard even a little of the dharma-paryāya called Saṅghāta?’

“That one said, ‘I have not heard it at all.’

“The sage said, ‘Who will teach the Dharma to a burnt sentient being, except for one who abides in compassion and, due to that, teaches the Dharma to sentient beings?’

“He said: ‘Child of the lineage, listen further. At a time immeasurably long ago, immeasurably many eons past, at that time there was a righteous Dharma king named King Vimala-chāndra. Child of the lineage, a son was born into the house of King Vimala-chāndra. Thereupon the great King Vimala-chāndra assembled the augural brahmins and said to them, ‘Brahmins, what sort of sign do you see for the youth?’ Then the augural brahmins said: ‘Great King, it is not good. This youth who was born is not good.’ The king said, ‘Brahmins, what will become of him?’ The augurs said, ‘King, if he attains the age of seven years, this youth will endanger the life of his mother and father.’ At that, the king spoke as follows: ‘Even if there may be an obstacle to my life, fair enough, but I will not kill this son of mine. It is very rare to attain birth as a human in this world; therefore, I will not commit such harm to the body of any human.’

“After that, the youth grew rapidly. Specifically, when he reached the age of one month, he had grown the amount that others grow in two years. After that, the King Vimala-chāndra knew too that the youth had grown because of karma that the king himself had accumulated.

“Then the king gave his kingdom to that youth and spoke as follows: ‘May you become a king well renowned and with a vast dominion. Rule righteously with Dharma, not by what is not Dharma.’

“Then, having granted him the kingdom, he bestowed on him the title ‘king.’ And King Vimala-chāndra acts no more as king of his own land.

“Then the million ministers proceeded to the place where King Vimala-chāndra was, and having reached there, they spoke to King Vimala-chāndra as follows: ‘O Great King, why is it that you are not now acting as king of your own land?’

“The king said, ‘For immeasurably many eons, although I have ruled as one having kingdoms, wealth, and power, I have never had enough.’

“And at that time, at that moment, before much time had passed, that child took the life of his father and mother, and therein he accumulated the karma of the uninterrupted actions.

“O being, I also remember the time when suffering feelings arose for that king, and he felt regret and sobbed, choking on tears, and I generated a mind of great compassion for him. Having gone there, I taught the Dharma, and when he too heard that Dharma, those uninterrupted actions were quickly purified without any remainder.’

“He said, ‘Those great ascetics who hear the Saṅghāta dharma-parīkṣā, the king of sūtras, will attain the unsurpassed source of Dharma, the purification of all wickedness, and the pacification of all that is delusional.

The Dharma that swiftly sets you free
I shall explain, so listen well:

‘If just a single four-line verse
is explained in a continual stream,
all wickedness will be purified,
and stream-entry will be attained.
From all wickedness, one is released.’

With this solemn utterance,
suffering beings are completely freed
from the bondage of the fear of hell.

Then the man rose from his seat,
placed his palms together as
he prostrated to him with head bent down.
He approved by saying ‘excellent.’

‘Excellent, virtuous friends.
Excellent, those who teach the great method,
the Saṅghāta sūtra, which destroys wickedness,
and also for those who hear it, excellent.’

“Then at that time, at that moment, from in the middle of the space above, 12,000 deva sons placed their palms together and came before the sage. They prostrated at his feet and said, ‘Blessed One, Great Ascetic, for how long back do you cognize?’

“Likewise, four million naga kings came and 18,000 yaksha kings came. After placing their palms together and bowing down to the sage, they said, ‘Great One, for how long back do you cognize?’

“The sage said, ‘For hundreds of thousands of myriad millions of countless eons.’

“They said, ‘By which virtuous karma will this bad karma be completely pacified in an instant?’

“He said: ‘By hearing the Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya. From among the sentient beings who have gathered here, all those who had faith upon hearing this dharma-paryāya are predicted to unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. If those persons who have committed the five uninterrupted actions even just hear this dharma-paryāya called Saṅghāta, they will completely exhaust and completely purify their karma of the five uninterrupted actions, instantly and entirely. For countless hundreds of thousands of myriad millions of eons, the doors to the lower realms will be closed; the thirty-two doors to the devas’ worlds will be opened. If that is how the roots of virtue of one who also hears even so much as just a four-line verse from this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya will become, what need is there to speak of one who shows it respect with flowers, incense, fragrance, garlands, lotions, powders, robes, canopies, banners and pennants, and who venerates it, makes drawings, makes offerings, joins together cymbals and musical instruments, and rejoices afterward one time, approving by saying, “Well said. Excellent, excellent.”’”

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, as for one who places their palms together and prostrates when the Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya is expounded, does merely placing their palms together produce a mass of merit?”

The Blessed One said: “Child of the lineage, listen. Even those who have committed the five uninterrupted actions, have ordered them done and have rejoiced in the doing of them, and who place their palms together and prostrate upon hearing as little as a mere four-line verse from this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya, if all their karma of the five uninterrupted actions will be completely purified when they prostrate, Sarva-shūra, what need is there to mention those who hear this entire Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya comprehensively? This one will produce a much greater mass of merit than the former. Child of the lineage, I will show you an analogy in order to make the meaning of this Saṅghāta sūtra understood. Sarva-shūra, it is as follows: To make an analogy, five great rivers issue forth from the palace of the naga king Anavatāpta, where the sun never rises. If some person should count the drops of these five great rivers, Sarva-shūra, would they be able to reach the end by counting their drops?”

He said, “Blessed One, that cannot be.”

The Blessed One said: “Sarva-shūra, likewise too, it is impossible to reach the end of the roots of virtue of the Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya by counting for one hundred eons or even for one thousand eons. Sarva-shūra, what do you think about this? Doesn’t the one who explains this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya for even an instant undertake hardships?”

He said, “Blessed One, that one undertakes hardships.”

The Blessed One said: “Sarva-shūra, the one who is able to explain this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya undertakes much greater hardships than that. It is as follows: To make an analogy, by means of counting the drops in the five great rivers that arrive from Lake Anavatāpta, it is not possible to reach the end.”

He said, “Blessed One, what are those five great rivers?”

The Blessed One said: “They are as follows: Ganges, Sita, Vākshu, Yāmuna and Chandra-bhāga. These are the five great rivers that arrive to the great ocean. Each of the five great rivers is accompanied

by five hundred rivers. Sarva-shūra, these five rivers also descend from the sky with a thousand rivers each, and by them living beings are satisfied.”

He said, “Which are the thousand that accompany each of them?”

The Blessed One said: “Súndari is accompanied by a thousand, Shámkha is accompanied by a thousand, Vahánti is accompanied by a thousand, Chitra-séna is accompanied by a thousand and Dharma-vrítiti is accompanied by a thousand. Sarva-shūra, these great rivers each possess a thousand accompanying rivers.

“They let fall a stream of rain onto the planet earth. Sarva-shūra, they release streams of rain drops from time to time, and this produces flowers and fruits and crops. When the streams of rain are released onto the planet earth, water will be produced. By the water that is produced, fields and gardens are all satiated and made happy. Sarva-shūra, it is as follows: To make an analogy, the lord of living beings makes all the planet earth happy. Likewise, Sarva-shūra, this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya is explained on earth for the benefit of many beings and for the happiness of many beings. The lifespan of humans is not like the lifespan of the devas of the Thirty-Three. If you should ask who are the devas of the Thirty-Three, Sarva-shūra, those who dwell where Indra, the lord of the devas, dwells are called the Thirty-Three.

“Sarva-shūra, there are also sentient beings who engage in good verbal conduct, and it is impossible to make an analogy for their mass of merit, too. There are also sentient beings who engage in faulty verbal conduct, and it is impossible to make an analogy for their hell and animal rebirths. Those sentient beings who come to experience the sufferings of hell beings, animals and pretas have no refuge whatsoever. Their hopes having been dashed there, they lament and fall into hells. They should be seen as under the power of non-virtuous friends. And those sentient beings who engage in good verbal conduct and for whose mass of merit it is impossible to make an analogy,

they should be seen as under the power of virtuous friends. When one sees a virtuous friend, a tathāgata is seen. When one sees a tathāgata, all one's wickedness is purified. When the lord of beings causes joy on earth, it will be impossible to make an analogy for the happiness of the sentient beings on earth.

“Sarva-shūra, likewise, this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya too performs the functions of a buddha for the sentient beings of the planet earth. Anyone who has not heard the Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya is unable to be completely enlightened in the unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. They are unable to turn the wheel of Dharma. They are unable to beat the gong of the Dharma. They are unable to sit on the lion throne of the Dharma. They are unable to enter the sphere of nirvana. They are unable to illuminate with countless light rays. Sarva-shūra, likewise, those who have not heard this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya are also unable to sit in the heart of enlightenment.”

Sarva-shūra said: “Blessed One, may I ask about a certain wonder? Sugata, may I ask about a certain wonder?”

The Blessed One said, “Sarva-shūra, ask whatever you wish and I will clear away your doubts.”

He said, “Who was that sage who liberated those sentient beings from the karma of the five uninterrupted actions and then placed them one-by-one on the level of one who will never turn away?”

He said:

‘The speech of buddhas is profound;
Sarva-shūra, listen to me:

The Saṅghāta sūtra is a teacher,
manifesting in the form of a sage.
The Saṅghāta manifests, out of kindness,
even bodies of buddhas.

As many grains of sand as the Ganges holds,
 in just that many forms it teaches.
 It teaches in the form of a Buddha.
 It teaches even the essence of Dharma.

Who wishes to see a Buddha,
 Saṅghāta is equivalent to a Buddha.
 Wherever the Saṅghāta is,
 always there the Buddha is.'

The Blessed One said: "Child of the lineage, listen. Sarva-shūra, at a time long past, ninety-nine countless eons ago, there arose twelve million buddhas. When the Tathāgata Ratnóttama arose, I became courageous in giving, and honored twelve million buddhas with the name of Chāndra. I attended them with food, drink, fragrance, garlands, lotions, whatever pleased them, good meals and everything required for their comfort. And having attended them thus, I recall attaining there a prediction of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment.

"Sarva-shūra, I recall that there arose eighteen million buddhas named Ratnavabhāsa. At that time too, having become courageous in giving, I honored eighteen million tathāgatas with the name of Garbha-sēna with fragrance, garlands, lotions, ornaments and decorative attire, as was appropriate to each, and having done so, I attained there too a prediction of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment.

"Sarva-shūra, I recall twenty million buddhas, and every one of those tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas was named Shikhi-sāmbhava.

"Sarva-shūra, I recall twenty million buddhas, and every one of those tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas was named Kāshyapa. At that time too, having become courageous in giving, I revered the tathāgatas with fragrance, garlands and lotions, and then I offered them reverential service in the way that service should be of-

ferred reverentially to tathāgatas. And there too I attained a prediction of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment.

“Sarva-shūra, there arose sixteen million buddhas named Buddha Vimala-prabhāsa, and at that time I was a rich head of household, with great wealth and possessions. Having renounced all possessions, I offered those sixteen million buddhas reverential service with offerings of sitting cloths, garments, fragrance, garlands, lotions and blankets, just as reverential service should be offered to tathāgatas. And at that very time I attained a prediction of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. This too I remember, but the prediction’s exact time had not yet arrived.

“Sarva-shūra, listen. Ninety-five million buddhas arose in the world, and each and every one of those tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas was named Shakyamuni. I at that time had become a righteous Dharma king and honored those ninety-five million tathāgatas named Shakyamuni with fragrance, garlands, lotions, sitting cloths, garments, incense, banners and pennants. And at that very time I attained a prediction of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. This I remember.

“Sarva-shūra, there arose in the world ninety million tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas named Krakatsūnda, and at that time I was a rich young brahmin, with much wealth and possessions. Having renounced all possessions, I honored all those tathāgatas with fragrance, garlands, lotions, sitting cloths and garments. And having offered service to those tathāgatas as was appropriate to each individually, at that very time I attained a prediction of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. This too I remember, but I had not arrived at the prediction’s exact time.

“Sarva-shūra, there arose in the world eighteen million buddhas, and as for all of them, every one of those tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas was named Kānaka-mūni. At that time, having become courageous in giving, I honored all those tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas with fragrance, garlands, lotions, sitting cloths,

clothing and ornaments. I offered them service in the way that service should be offered to tathāgatas, and at that very time I also remember attaining a prediction of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. But I had not arrived at the prediction's exact time.

“Sarva-shūra, there arose in the world thirteen million buddhas, and as for all of them, every one of those tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas was named Avabhāsa-shri. I honored those tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas with sitting cloths, garments, fragrance, garlands, lotions, blankets and ornaments. I offered them reverential service in the way that reverential service should be offered to tathāgatas. Those tathāgatas also explained various approaches to the Dharma to ascertain its meanings and the discipline, and then at that very time I attained a prediction of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. This too I remember, but the prediction's time had not yet arrived then either.

“Sarva-shūra, there arose in the world twenty-five million tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas named Pushya. At that time I was a renunciate and honored those tathāgatas. As Anānda offers me service now, likewise I offered service to those tathāgatas, and there I attained a prediction of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. This I remember, but the prediction's time had not yet arrived then either.

“Sarva-shūra, there arose in the world twelve million tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas named Vipāshyin. I honored those tathāgatas with sitting cloths, garments, fragrance, garlands and lotions. I offered them service in the way that service should be offered to tathāgatas. At that time, at that moment, having become a renunciate, right there I also remember attaining a prediction of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. Soon thereafter, the last Vipāshyin to arise explained this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya, and I knew that, and then at that time a rain of the seven precious substances showered down upon the planet earth. And then there was no more poverty among the sentient beings on earth. At that very time I attained a prediction of unsurpassed, perfect and com-

plete enlightenment. After that, for a long period of time I was not predicted.”

He said: “What was that time? What was the measure?”

The Blessed One said: “Sarva-shūra, listen. A countless eon after that, the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfect and Complete Buddha Dipāmkara arose in the world. At that time, at that moment, I was a brahmin youth named Megha. At the time when Tathāgata Dipāmkara arose in the world, I was practicing celibacy in the form of a brahmin youth. Then, when I had seen Tathāgata Dipāmkara, I scattered seven ūtpala flowers and dedicated to unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. And that tathāgata predicted to me, ‘Brahmin youth, in the future, in a countless eon, you will become a tathāgata, arhat, perfect and complete buddha in the world named Shakyamuni.’

“After that, Sarva-shūra, I sat in the space above at a height of twelve palmyra trees, and attained the state of forbearance with regard to unproduced phenomena. Just as if it were yesterday or today, I remember directly all those roots of virtue from when I practiced celibacy for countless eons and was endowed with the perfections. Furthermore, Sarva-shūra, I established countless hundreds of thousands of myriad millions of sentient beings individually in virtuous Dharma. Therefore, Sarva-shūra, now, having been manifestly, completely enlightened into unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment, what need is there to mention that I wish to benefit all sentient beings? Sarva-shūra, I teach the Dharma in many ways to sentient beings.

“Whatever the form by which they are to be subdued, I teach the Dharma in that form. In the world of the devas, I teach the Dharma in the form of a deva. In the land of the nagas, I teach the Dharma in the form of a naga. In the land of the yakshas, I teach the Dharma in the form of a yaksha. In the land of the pretas, I teach the Dharma in the form of a preta. In the world of humans, I teach the Dharma in the form of a human. To those sentient beings who are to be subdued by a buddha, I teach the Dharma in the form of a

buddha. To those sentient beings who are to be subdued by a bodhisattva, I teach the Dharma in the form of a bodhisattva. By whatever form it is that sentient beings are to be subdued, I teach the Dharma in that very form.

“Thus, Sarva-shūra, I teach the Dharma to sentient beings in many ways. If one should wonder why that is, Sarva-shūra, it is because just as sentient beings hear the Dharma in many ways, so too those sincere sentient beings will make roots of virtue in many ways: They will engage in acts of generosity. They will make merit. They will also go without sleep for their own sake. They will meditate on the mindfulness of death, too. They will do such virtuous actions as these that are to be done. Due to having heard the Dharma, they will remember these previous roots of virtue. That will come to be for the long-term aim, benefit and happiness of devas and humans.

“Sarva-shūra, that being so, as soon as the Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya is heard, the good qualities and benefits in this way become immeasurable.”

Then, those sentient beings spoke to one another. They said: “There must be something else also that, by having done and accumulated it, one will be manifestly, completely enlightened in the unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment, and the result of the virtuous Dharma of wanting to benefit all sentient beings will ripen.”

“Those who have come to trust in the Dharma will say, ‘There is a Dharma perfectly in accord with things as they are.’ The great ripening result of their virtue will be the unsurpassed happiness of the Dharma. As for the ignorant, foolish sentient beings who say that there aren’t any dharmas, and there is no passing beyond the dharmas either, their great ripening result will be to go to bad migrations. Again and again they will be aiming for grounds of bad migrations. For eight eons, they will experience the suffering sensations of the hell realms. For twelve eons, they will experience the suffering sensations in the lands of pretas. For sixteen eons, they will be born among the āsuras. For 9,000 eons, they will be born among the

harmful bhūtas and piśāchas. For 14,000 eons, they will be without tongues. For 16,000 eons, they will die in their mother's womb. For 12,000 eons, they will become round lumps of flesh. For 11,000 eons, they will be born blind and will experience suffering sensations, and their parents will think, 'We have suffered meaninglessly. The birth of our son was meaningless. Bearing him in the womb for nine months was meaningless.' They will experience the sensation of cold and heat. They will also experience the suffering of hunger and thirst intensely. They will experience many sufferings in this life as well. Although the parents see a son in their house, there is no joy, and the parents' hopes will be utterly dashed.

"Sarva-shūra, in this way, sentient beings who abandon the holy Dharma are aiming for hell and animal rebirths. At their time of death, they will be pierced with great agonizing pains. Sarva-shūra, those who say, 'The Dharma exists; there are those who go beyond the dharmas,' will be born in the north on Uttara-kuru for twenty eons, by that root of virtue. For twenty-five eons they will be born equal in fortune to the devas of the Thirty-Three. When they die and transmigrate from the Thirty-Three, they will be born in the north on Uttara-kuru. They will not be born in a mother's womb. They will see 100,000 world systems, and these will all be called 'Sukhāvati.' They will see all the buddha fields as well. After seeing them, they will abide right there in them. They will be enlightened in perfect and complete enlightenment right there.

"Sarva-shūra, thus indeed this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya has great power. Those who have a mind inspired with pure faith toward it will never meet their moment of death without having let go of their fears. They will also be endowed with perfectly pure ethics.

"Sarva-shūra, there are some sentient beings who say: 'The Tathāgata releases many sentient beings day and night, and yet the realm of sentient beings still has not been depleted. Many make prayers for enlightenment. Many are born in the worlds of higher rebirths. Many achieve nirvana. So why is it that the realm of sentient beings has not been depleted?'"

The heretical practitioners of other traditions, wandering mendicants and naked ascetics had this thought, ‘Let us go dispute with the renunciate Gāutama.’ Then 84,000 brahmins, heretical practitioners of other traditions and wandering mendicants, and many hundreds of naked ascetics arrived there in Rājagṛha. And at that time, at that moment, the Blessed One displayed a smile.

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Maitrēya arose from his seat, placed his upper robe over one shoulder, set his right knee on the ground and bowed down with palms together toward the Blessed One. He addressed the Blessed One as follows: “Blessed One, since tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas do not smile without cause and without conditions, what is the cause of the smile, and what is the condition?”

The Blessed One said: “Child of the lineage, listen. Today a great assembly will appear here in Rājagṛha.”

“Blessed One, who will be here? Devas or nagas or yakshas or humans or non-humans?”

The Blessed One said: “Maitrēya, today devas, nagas, yakshas, humans and non-humans will all come here. Eighty-four thousand brahmins will also come here. Nine thousand million heretical practitioners, wandering mendicants and naked ascetics will come, and they will dispute with me. I will teach the Dharma to pacify the disputes of all of them. The brahmins will all generate the thought of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. The 9,000 million heretical practitioners, wandering mendicants and naked ascetics will all attain the fruit of stream-entry. Eighteen thousand million naga kings will come, and they will hear the Dharma from me. After they have heard it, they will all generate the thought of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. Sixty thousand million children of the devas of the pure abodes will come. Thirty thousand million wicked maras and their attendants will come. Twelve thousand million āsura kings will come. Kings, 500 in number, together with their retinues, will come to hear the Dharma. After hearing the

Dharma from me, they will all generate the thought of unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment.”

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Maitréya prostrated with his head at the feet of the Blessed One, and after circumambulating the Blessed One three times, disappeared on that very spot.

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra arose from his seat, placed his upper robe over one shoulder, set his right knee on the ground, placed his palms together and bowed down to the Blessed One. He said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, what are the names of those kings, 500 in number?”

The Blessed One said: “Sarva-shūra, listen. There is the king called Nanda, the king called Upanānda, the king called Jinārshabha, the king called Brahma-sēna, the king called Brahma-ghósha, the king called Sudārshana, the king called Priya-sēna, the king called Nanda-sēna, the king called Bimbi-sāra, the king called Prasēna-jit, and the king called Virúdhaka. There are these, and the rest of the kings, 500 in number, and each of them has 100,000 million attendants. With the exception of Virúdhaka, each and every one of them has set out for unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. Thirty thousand million bodhisattvas are coming from the eastern direction. Fifty thousand million bodhisattvas are coming from the southern direction. Sixty thousand million bodhisattvas are coming from the western direction. Eighty thousand million bodhisattvas are coming from the northern direction. Ninety thousand million bodhisattvas are coming from below. One hundred thousand million bodhisattvas are coming from above, and each and every one of them is abiding on the ten grounds.”

Then, in order to see the Blessed One, all those bodhisattvas proceeded to Raja-griha, to where the Blessed One was. And all those bodhisattvas, each and every one, had set out for unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment.

Then the Blessed One said to the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra: “Sarva-shūra, go to the world systems of the ten directions and

say to all the bodhisattvas: ‘Today, in the great city of Rājagṛha, the Tathāgata is teaching the Dharma. Therefore, all you residents of the world systems in the ten directions, place your palms together and bow down in homage.’ Say this, and as soon as you have made it understood, come back immediately to listen to the Dharma.”

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Sarvaśūra arose from his seat, prostrated with his head at the feet of the Blessed One, circumambulated the Blessed One three times, and then disappeared through supernatural powers. Then the bodhisattva, the great being Sarvaśūra went to the world systems of the ten directions and instructed the bodhisattvas: “Today, in the great city of Rājagṛha, the Tathāgata is teaching the Dharma. Therefore, you should reply to that, ‘Excellent,’ and on account of that, on this very day you will receive benefit and attain great bliss.”

Then, having gone to the world systems of the ten directions, the bodhisattva, the great being Sarvaśūra honored all the buddhas and informed the bodhisattvas. And in just the amount of time as, for example, a strong person snapping their fingers, the bodhisattva, the great being Sarvaśūra arrived in the great city of Rājagṛha where the Blessed One was, and was present before the Blessed One.

Then the brahmins, heretical practitioners of other traditions, wandering mendicants and naked ascetics also gathered. Devas, nagas, yakshas, many human beings, the kings, 500 in number, together with their attendants, and 33,000 million wicked maras, together with their attendants, also gathered.

And at that time the great city of Rājagṛha trembled. A shower of celestial sandalwood powder rained down on the world systems in the ten directions, and a shower of celestial flowers also rained down and remained in a towering palace at the level of the topknot on the crown of the Blessed One’s head. Also at that time, Indra, the lord of the devas, wielded a thunderbolt in the presence of the Tathāgata. Then at that time, from the four directions, four massive winds stirred up the earth. After they rose up, they carried off the garbage,

sweepings, and dust from the great city of Rājagṛha. A shower of fragrant waters rained down on the world systems of the ten directions. A shower of utpala flowers, lotuses, kumuda flowers and white lotuses rained down on the world systems of the ten directions, and they all remained as flower-canopies above the heads of all those sentient beings. Eighty-four thousand towering palaces remained motionless in the space above the crown of the head of the Tathāgata. Within the 84,000 towering palaces there arose 84,000 thrones made of the seven precious substances. On all of those thrones, tathāgatas are seated and teach the Dharma. Then this galaxy of a billion world systems trembled in six ways.

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Sarvaśūra placed his palms together, bowed toward the Blessed One, and said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, what is the cause, what is the condition for the display of such supernatural apparitions here in the great city of Rājagṛha?”

The Blessed One said: “It is as follows: To make an analogy, a king rubbed the head of some unstable man, wild, full of ego-grasping, full of selfish grasping at things as his own and also poverty-stricken. That man went up to the king’s gate. Once he arrived there, he insistently wished to enter inside the palace of the king. At that, the king’s ministers and retinue seized him and beat him in many ways. Then at that time, at that moment, the king heard that the destitute man insistently wanted to enter inside, and thought: ‘He is undoubtedly someone wishing to kill me.’ Thinking that, the king became angry and said to his retinue: ‘You, take that man to a secluded mountain spot and kill him. Kill all his servants, parents, children, male and female slaves, and workers, too.’ After he had issued these instructions, they were all killed, and then his friends and relatives were pierced with unbearable agonizing pains. In the same way too, as soon as the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfect and Complete Buddha explains the Dharma, just like that arrogant person, childish ordinary individuals also, with respect to the Tathāgata, seize upon the form, color, marks and shape as identifying signs, and think it is the body of the Tathāgata. Then, after they have heard many Dharma teachings, they fall into exceptional arrogance and speak all kinds of nonsense. Overcome

by ego-grasping and selfish grasping at things as their own, they do not themselves listen to this sort of Dharma, nor do they proclaim it. Even when someone is explaining a sūtra or a verse or as little as just an analogy, they say, ‘We ourselves know,’ and they do not retain it nor do they lend their ears to listen.

“If one should wonder why that is, it is because they have become full of arrogance in this way. Because of their extensive learning, they are not attentive. Those who keep company with childish ordinary individuals will not act to become endowed with this sort of Dharma. They will not listen to words endowed with this sort of Dharma. Due to their extensive learning, they become conceited. People like these publish their own compositions. They publish the prefaces to their own texts, too. They deceive themselves and the whole world. They pointlessly consume public resources and having consumed them, they do not digest them well. At their time of death, great fears will arise.

“Those sentient beings will say to that one: ‘You have trained us in many crafts. Why are you not able to settle yourself?’

“He said this to them, ‘Friends, I am unable to settle myself now.’

“At that, those sentient beings will lament and wail in various ways. Just as, with no one else to blame, through the contributing cause of their own actions, the large group of relatives was killed for the aims of only that one person, so too these sentient beings at their time of death will also lament and wail, and they will see themselves aiming towards rebirths as hell beings and animals on account of a non-virtuous friend.

“In the same way, I say to you brahmins and heretical practitioners of other traditions, ‘Don’t become haughty.’

“It is as follows: To make an analogy, without having grown feathers and wings, a bird cannot fly into the sky to go to the world of the devas. In the same way, you cannot reach nirvana either, as you do not have that sort of supernatural power. If one should wonder why, it is

because after one is born in a fowl's rebirth through a type of karma, in no time at all this body will disintegrate and die in the end.

"At the time of death, after they have lost their sense of taste, they will be thoroughly terrified, thinking: 'Why did we hold on to this body? We have not experienced the happiness of the deva world or the happiness of the human world either, and we will not abide in the abode of nirvana either. Since we pointlessly held on to this body, what is our migration path? Who will be our support? Where will be our birth and where will be our destruction?'"

Then the Blessed One said to those heretical practitioners of other traditions, wandering mendicants and naked ascetics: "Do not give up hope on this precious planet earth. Do not become outsiders to the rare and excellent gem that is the Dharma. Friends, ask the Tathāgata whatever you wish and I will completely fulfill all your wishes."

At that, all the brahmins, heretical practitioners of other traditions, wandering mendicants and naked ascetics arose from their seats, placed their upper robes over one shoulder, and with palms together asked the Blessed One: "Blessed One, although tathāgatas have been releasing sentient beings from cyclic existence day and night, there is neither a decrease nor an increase in the realm of sentient beings. Blessed One, due to what cause and what condition do sentient beings display birth and cessation equally?"

Then the Blessed One said to the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna: "In order to clear away great regret and in order to set ablaze the lamp of the Dharma, the heretics put on great armor and ask a great series of questions. In the future, young and old sentient beings will understand birth and disintegration. Bhaishajya-sēna, there are also old sentient beings who, like young beings, do not know anything at all.

"Bhaishajya-sēna, it is as follows: To make an analogy, some person washed his hair, put on new clothes and went outside his home. People said to him, 'You wear your new clothes well.' But another person

also washed his head and washed his old clothes, and because they were old, although he had washed his hair, that man was not beautiful. Just as his clothes were not beautiful, so Bhaishajya-séna, the old sentient beings that there are on the planet earth are not beautiful, and the young sentient beings display birth and cessation.”

At that, the brahmins and heretical practitioners of other traditions and all the wandering mendicants arose from their seats and said to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, who among us is young? And who among us is old?”

The Blessed One said: “Again and again you have experienced the feelings of hell beings, animals and pretas, and yet you are still not satisfied. Therefore, you are all old.”

At that, all the brahmins and all the naga kings said to the Blessed One, “We no longer delight in experiencing painful feelings in cyclic existence.”

The heretical practitioners of other traditions, wandering mendicants and naked ascetics said, “Nevertheless, among the young sentient beings, there are none who are able to realize emptiness directly.”

They said this, and the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna said to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, please look at this! Why is it so difficult for sentient beings to be motivated?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, please listen. The Tathāgata directly comprehends the entire world.”

At that, 94,000 million young beings were present before the Blessed One. They did not prostrate to the Blessed One, nor did they say a word. Then the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna said to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, these sentient beings do not speak to the Blessed One. They are utterly silent and do not prostrate either. What is the reason that they do not ask any questions of the Blessed One? What is the condition?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, listen. You should see that these sentient beings who say, ‘The young sentient beings are not able to realize emptiness directly,’ are young sentient beings.”

And those sentient beings said: “Venerable Blessed One, we are young sentient beings. Venerable Sugata, we are young sentient beings.”

The Blessed One said, “These sentient beings comprehend the world directly, but now, display the measure of the world from your own bodies.”

At that time, at that moment, the 94,000 million young beings, without leaving their bodies, hovered in the middle of space and attained the ten grounds.

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna said to the Blessed One: “Such sentient beings who make an effort to completely exhaust and completely purify cyclic existence have well achieved their achievement. Blessed One, these sentient beings were born on this very day and, Blessed One, on this very day these sentient beings were thoroughly liberated and they were all seen to attain the ten grounds.”

At that, the brahmins and heretical practitioners of other traditions, wandering mendicants, naked ascetics, naga kings, and the wicked Mara and his retinue all arrived for the purpose of deceiving, and said to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, we have come here before the Tathāgata, and now that we have heard this dharma-paryāya, may we attain the sort of happiness of a buddha. May we become just that sort of tathāgata, arhat, perfect and complete buddha in the world.”

The Blessed One said: “Just so, gentlemen. Regardless of how you have come to the Tathāgata, since you have heard this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya, you have generated the mind of the unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. That being so, before long, you will all be fully and completely enlightened into the unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment.”

As soon as the Blessed One had spoken these words, all those heretical practitioners of other traditions immediately attained the state of forbearance with respect to unproduced phenomena. They also all became bodhisattvas established on the ten grounds, and thereupon, all those bodhisattvas rose up into the air to a height of seven palmyra trees, and offered to the Tathāgata towering palaces made of the seven precious substances. They also all sustained various miraculous emanations and performed acts displaying supernatural powers. Then, abiding above the crown of the head of the Blessed One, they scattered bits of flowers on the Tathāgata, and they all contemplated the Tathāgata, too. They also perceived their own bodies as buddhas.

Many hundreds of thousands of millions of deva sons also scattered flowers on the Tathāgata and spoke these words: “The ascetic Gāutama is a great gain. He is a great field. He is a protector of the world. He has reached the attainment of meditative stabilization. He is a master, whose aim is to produce other masters. Through skillful means, gradually, he completely releases sentient beings such as these from cyclic existence. With even just one well-spoken phrase, he completely frees so many sentient beings from cyclic existence.”

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna arose from his seat, placed his upper robe over one shoulder, set his right knee on the ground, and bowed with his palms together toward the Blessed One. He said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, due to what cause and what condition do these children of the lineage issue forth these words, perform many acts displaying supernatural powers and compose many praises of the Tathāgata?”

The Blessed One said: “Child of the lineage, listen. They are not praising me. Rather, they are praising their own bodies, and they will establish their own bodies as a holy seat of Dharma. They will emit light rays of Dharma from their bodies. All the buddhas will support them too, in order to awaken them fully and completely in the unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. And when they have become fully and completely enlightened, they will teach the Dharma.”

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna said this to the Blessed One, “The Tathāgata, the Sugata completely frees many sentient beings day and night, yet sentient beings still have not been depleted.”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-sēna, it is good, very good that you have thought to question the Tathāgata on this point. Bhaishajya-sēna, it is as follows: To make an analogy, there is some rich person with great wealth and property, possessing much wealth, grain, treasures and granaries, and having many dependents, including male servants, female servants and laborers. In addition to a large mass of wealth, he is in possession of many fields and gardens, such as those that have barley, wheat, rice, beans, lentils and many other grains. After that person planted the seeds of all the grain in the springtime, at another season all those seeds would ripen fully. That man would place the various types of grain separately, and having stored them there, he would eat them through to springtime, and then again he would plant. In the same way, Bhaishajya-sēna, sentient beings will also thoroughly deplete all the karma from previous actions, and then they will seek out fields of merit and produce roots of virtue. Having produced them, they will earnestly practice virtuous Dharma. And having made all the Dharmas increase, they will produce joy and contentment. Bhaishajya-sēna, because of that joyful and contented mind, they will not go to waste for many thousands of millions of eons. Bhaishajya-sēna, in the same way, a bodhisattva who has produced the initial thought of enlightenment will never be subject to waste. In short, they will realize all dharmas.”

He said, “Blessed One, what sort of dreams will be seen by bodhisattvas who have produced the initial thought of enlightenment?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-sēna, bodhisattvas who have produced the initial thought of enlightenment will see many fearful things in their dreams. If you should wonder why that is so, it is because they are purifying all their karma. Sentient beings with bad karma cannot eliminate their unbearable suffering. But the former, although seeing a bad dream, is not afraid.”

He said, “Blessed One, in what way will fearful things be seen in the dreams of bodhisattvas who have produced the initial thought of enlightenment?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, a fire will be seen blazing. At that, the bodhisattvas should know that all their delusions have been burnt. Secondly, Bhaishajya-séna, although bodhisattvas who have produced the initial thought of enlightenment see water stirred up and greatly churning, they will not be afraid. If you should wonder why that is, Bhaishajya-séna, in this way all the bondage due to ignorance is cast aside and what is bad is purified. Thirdly, Bhaishajya-séna, bodhisattvas who have produced the initial thought of enlightenment will see greatly fearful things in their dreams.”

He asked, “Blessed One, what are they?”

The Blessed One said: “Although they see their head shaven, Bhaishajya-séna, they would not become frightened by that. If you should wonder why that is, they would think: ‘My attachment, anger and ignorance have been shaved off. I am victorious over cyclic existence, with its six realms.’ Their place is not in the hell beings’ realms either. It is not among animals or pretas. It is not among the āsuras. It is not among the nagas. It is not among the devas. Bhaishajya-séna, bodhisattvas who have produced the initial thought of enlightenment attain birth in the perfectly pure buddha fields. Bhaishajya-séna, in the future, at a time to come, if any sentient beings dedicates their mind to enlightenment, on account of that, they should be seen as having great commitment. Bhaishajya-séna, although they encounter contempt, they should not be disheartened nor should they be discouraged.

“Bhaishajya-séna, many are the Dharmas I have taught. Bhaishajya-séna, for some hundreds of thousands of myriad millions of eons, I engaged in arduous activities. But that engagement in arduous activities was not for the sake of wealth. It was not in order to enjoy a livelihood. It was not in order to enjoy power. Bhaishajya-séna, I engaged in arduous activities in order to comprehend the nature of

phenomena. But until the time, until the moment that I heard this Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya, I did not attain unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. But, Bhaishajya-sēna, on the very day I heard it, I was entirely, completely enlightened into unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment.

“Bhaishajya-sēna, this dharma-paryāya is profound. Hearing this dharma-paryāya is rare. Bhaishajya-sēna, the arising of tathāgatas is also supremely rare. Bhaishajya-sēna, those who uphold this dharma-paryāya are also supremely rare. All those who hear this dharma-paryāya will be fully and completely enlightened in unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. Bhaishajya-sēna, for a thousand eons, they will overcome cyclic existence. They will attain the perfectly pure buddha field. They will also thoroughly understand cessation and the path. They will be well-suited to thoroughly know the source. They will be well-suited to thoroughly know the place of virtue. They will be well-suited to directly know and thoroughly know the place of virtue. They will be well-suited to thoroughly know the place of virtue and to thoroughly know cessation. Bhaishajya-sēna, why is it called ‘cessation’?”

He said, “Blessed One, the meaning is that it is a place of Dharma.”

The Blessed One said, “Bhaishajya-sēna, what is a place of Dharma?”

He said: “Blessed One, what is called ‘Dharma’ is the engagement in enthusiastic perseverance, the guarding of ethics and possessing ethics. It is called a treasury of Dharma. Blessed One, this is the arising of a Dharma treasury.”

The Blessed One said, “Bhaishajya-sēna, that you thought to pose a question to the Tathāgata on this topic is good, very good.”

He said, “For what purpose do tathāgatas arise in the world?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-sēna, those who are possessed of much learning and highly knowledgeable know the arising of tathāgatas. Once they know of the arising of tathāgatas, they know the arising of tathāgatas to be a source of happiness. At the time when tathāgatas

arise in the world, sentient beings know all dharmas. Through skillful means, they know the dharmas. They know mundane and supramundane phenomena. They know the mundane and supramundane wisdom.”

He said, “Having realized wisdom itself, what nirvana do they seek out?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-sēna, once they have thoroughly understood the Dharma, they thoroughly know the Dharma. Bhaishajya-sēna, similarly, once they have thoroughly known the holy Dharma in a condensed form, the first attainment arises. Keeping in mind the Dharma just as they have heard it, they will attain the possession of Dharma. Bhaishajya-sēna, it is as follows: To make an analogy, a man became a trader, took a thousand-man load of gold and set off seeking profit. His parents say to him, ‘Son, listen. Take this thousand-coin load of gold. Carry well this gold of ours and of others.’

“That trader carried away the gold, and by the time a month had passed, he had squandered all that gold. After it was gone, the man reflected and became extremely unhappy. He was pierced with great agonizing pains in his heart. He was filled with remorse and shame, and did not go to his own home. His parents heard of this and fell into despair. Their hearts were pierced with great agonizing pains, and even their clothes were torn. ‘This bad son was born into our household in the form of a son, and also destroyed our household’s entire capacity to sustain itself. He has been useless to us, and we have been made to suffer. He has forced us into work as servants.’ Speaking thus, they lamented.

“After his parents had fallen into despair, they died. Then, hearing that his parents had despaired of him and died, the son also fell into despair and died. In just the same way, Bhaishajya-sēna, although the Tathāgata explains these matters, those who have no faith in my teachings will lose hope and at their time of death, they will die with their hearts pierced with great agonizing pains. Just as those parents fell into despair and suffered because of the gold, and had their hearts pierced with great agonizing pains because of their own and others’

gold, in the same way too, Bhaishajya-sēna, those who have no faith in my teachings, afterwards at their time of death are tormented and cry out in lamentation. They experience painful feelings, and after they have wasted the merits they previously created, they do not later create the merit that is associated with a good field. Because they have great agonizing pains piercing their hearts, at that time, at that moment, once they have seen the ceaseless, cruel places of rebirth in hell and as animals, and the realm of rebirth in the world of Yama, at their time of death they will think thus: ‘Who will be my protector so that I will not see the worlds of hell beings, animals, pretas and Yama, and so that I will not experience those painful feelings?’

“That one’s parents will say:

‘Child! The greatly terrifying thing
that is illness cannot come about.
How could that be?
Although those who are dying fear sickness,
in your case, son, there is no death.
From the fear and terror of disease
you will be set free.’

‘My consciousness is ceasing.
My body too is badly damaged.
All my limbs are in pain.
I am coming to see my death.

My eyes do not see, and
my ears do not hear.
Nor will anything reach my nose.
My body has no endurance.

My body is pained from limb to limb.
Just like a tree, I am mindless.
Saying my death is not nearing,
Mother, please just cheer me up.’

“The mother said:

‘Son, it is not right that you say that.
Do not frighten me so badly.
Since your body is wracked with a plague,
you will see all sorts of things.’

“The son said:

‘But I see no plague in my body.
I have no sickness and no pain.
I see extremely unbearable death.
My beloved body will be destroyed.
Since I have seen my whole body
overpowered by suffering,
to whom will I go for refuge?
Who will be my protector?’

“The parents said, ‘Son, a deva
must be punishing you, but
if offerings are made to the devas,
after that, you will recover.’

“The son said:

‘Whatever will make me recover,
I ask you please to do just that.
Please go quickly and make haste,
and make inquiries to the priest.’

“At that, his parents went before the altar of the deva, and gave incense for the deva. Then the priest offered the incense to the deva, and said the following: ‘The deva is punishing you; therefore you must honor the deva. Sacrifice to the deva. Kill livestock. Kill a man, too, and then your son will be released from his illness.’

“At that, those parents thought: ‘But we are poor. What can we do? If we don’t appease the deva, our son will die. If we are to appease him, since we’re poor, from where will we get a person and livestock?’ With these thoughts, they made haste and quickly went home. They took the few household items of any substance that they possessed, to sell in order to buy livestock. After that they approached another man.

“‘Sir, if you could give us some gold on loan and we are able to pay it back in ten days, that would be good. But if we are unable to pay it, we agree now to become your servants and do work.’

“They said this, and then the two of them carried off that gold and went to buy a man. The two of them bought a man, but that man did not know that he would be killed.

“At that, the parents became confused and did not return to their home. Instead, they went before the altar and said to the priest, ‘Quick, make the sacrificial offering.’

“Then the two parents killed the livestock themselves, and they also killed the man. Then the priest, intending to make the sacrificial offering, kindled a fire, and at that, the deva descended and said, ‘I have accepted your son.’ Then the parents overflowed with joy and elation.

“‘If our son is cured, even if we become servants, that is far superior,’ they said.

“After making the sacrifice to the deva, they returned home, and when they arrived there, they saw that their son had died. At that, the two parents, suffering and in deep despair, were pierced through their hearts with great agonizing pains. With their hopes dashed, they died right there, and in just the same way, Bhaishajya-sēna, one should not associate with non-virtuous friends.”

He said, “Blessed One, may I ask where those sentient beings were born?”

The Blessed One said: “Be quiet, Bhaishajya-séna. Do not ask me.”

He said: “Blessed One, I ask. Sugata, I ask.”

The Blessed One said: “On that occasion, Bhaishajya-séna, the mother was born in the great hell called the Hell of Lamentation. The father was born in the great hell called Crushing Hell. The son was born in the great hell called Hot Hell. The priest was born in the great hell of Avīci.”

He said: “Blessed One, where was that innocent man reborn? What was his future life?”

The Blessed One said, “Here, Bhaishajya-séna, that blameless man was reborn among the devas of the Heaven of Thirty-Three.”

He said, “Blessed One, what was the reason and what was the condition for that man to be born equal in fortune to the devas of the Heaven of Thirty-Three?”

The Blessed One said: “Listen, Bhaishajya-séna. That man, at his time of death, with a mind of faith in the Tathāgata, said one time, ‘I prostrate to the Buddha.’ Bhaishajya-séna, due to that root of virtue, he will experience the happiness of the devas of the Thirty-Three for sixty eons. For eighty eons, he will recollect past lives. Life after life, he will be free of all painful sorrows. As soon as he is born, he will ward off all sufferings. Those sentient beings are all unable to fully overcome sorrow.”

He said, “Blessed One, how will all sentient beings be capable of fully overcoming sorrow?”

The Blessed One said, “Bhaishajya-séna, they must exert effort.”

He said, “Blessed One, which exertion of effort?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, listen. What is called ‘effort’ is the demonstration of results. It is as follows: What is called ‘the

result of stream entry' is a place of effort. What is called 'the result of once-returning' is a place of effort. What is called 'the result of non-returning' is a place of effort. What is called 'the result of arhatship and the cessation that is the result of an arhat' is a place of effort. What is called 'the result of a pratyéka-buddha and the knowledge of the result of a pratyéka-buddha' is a place of effort. What is called 'the result of a bodhisattva and the place of enlightenment' is a place of effort. Bhaishajya-séna, these are what are called 'places of effort.'"

He said, "Blessed One, how are a stream enterer and the result of stream entry to be shown?"

The Blessed One said: "It is as follows: To make an analogy, one man planted a tree, and on that very day the tree took root, and on that very same day those roots went down a yōjana. Another man too planted a tree in the same way. But on that very day, it was shaken by the wind and that tree did not take root. Then this man removed the tree from that place, and also the other man said, 'Why did you dig up my earth?' And they quarreled and disputed. After that, at that time the king heard that those two men were quarreling and disputing, and he sent a messenger, saying, 'Go and bring those two men.'

"As you command, Your Majesty,' he said and raced off in great haste. He said to the two men, 'The king summons you.'

"At that, one of the men became frightened and apprehensive. But the other man, without fear or apprehension, was led to where the king was. After they had been led there, they were seated in the presence of the king.

"Then the king said to the two men, 'Sirs, why were you quarreling and disputing?'

"At that, the two men arose and addressed the king: 'Great King, please lend us your ear. Since we do not own any land at all, a tree was planted on a plot of borrowed land. After that, because it was shaken by the wind, it did not put down roots, and neither leaves nor

flowers nor fruit appeared. Great King, its roots did not go down a yojana. And this man fought and disputed with me, saying, 'It's your fault.' Nevertheless, since I am innocent, Your Majesty, please kindly understand that I am not even slightly guilty.'

"Then that king sent for his thirty million ministers, and when they had assembled, he commanded, 'You should speak.'

"The ministers said, 'What should we speak about?'

"Have you ever seen or heard that on the very day a tree was planted, it put down roots, and leaves, flowers and fruit appeared? In a week or half a month, make a determination of this case.'

"At that, those ministers arose from their seats and addressed the king: 'Great King, it is not appropriate for us to make a determination in this case. We are incapable of determining it. Great King, this is wondrous. For now, this man himself should be spoken to, "Sir, is what was said true? Speak."'

"He said, 'Great King, indeed, it is true.'

"The king said:

'On the very day a tree was planted,
roots went down, and leaves, flowers and fruit appeared.
On that very day, you say —
these words of yours are hard to believe.
No such thing has been seen or heard.'

"At that, the man placed palms together
and spoke these words before the king:
'Kindly go, and plant a tree yourself.
Please watch as the roots take hold.'

"Then the king and the thirty million ministers went out together, and the two men were placed in prison. Then the king himself planted a tree, and that tree neither took root, nor did leaves, flowers or

fruit appear. So the king became enraged and said, 'You, go quickly; come back with axes for felling trees.' They were fetched and, enraged at the tree planted by that man, he cut the leaves, flowers and fruit that had arisen on that tree. As soon as he cut that single tree, twelve trees appeared. He cut the twelve trees, and there appeared twenty-four trees made of the seven precious substances, together with roots, leaves and shoots. Then, from those twenty-four trees, there appeared twenty-four birds with golden crests and golden beaks and feathers made of the seven precious substances. At that, the king was overcome with rage and, taking the ax in his own hand, chopped at a tree. From the tree that he had chopped, nectar appeared. The king was troubled by that and issued instructions: 'Go and remove those two men from prison.' 'As you command, Your Majesty.' He raced off that very instant. The two men were removed from the prison and led to where the trees were.

"The king said: 'Did you plant the tree that multiplied when it was cut and became twenty-four? The tree I planted did not grow roots or leaves or flowers or fruit.'

"Then that man said, 'Great King, you are not endowed with the sort of merit I have.'

"At that, the thirty million ministers knelt, placing both knees on the ground, and said to the man: 'This previous king is not fit. Therefore, you should be king.'

"Then that man addressed the ministers in verse:

A king's enjoyment is of no use to me,
nor have I need of wealth or grain.
Since in the buddhas I have faith,
among humans may I become supreme!

May I go where the Tathāgata is,
to the sphere of nirvana, which is peace.

The Dharma that leads home to nirvana:
That should be explained to you.

Seating himself cross-legged,
He then made this avowal:

Due to actions I did in the past,
I came to be in the king's jail.
But by uttering this prayer,
may my karma be depleted.

“At that, twenty-four million birds with diamond beaks struck cymbals. Then at that time, at that moment, 32,000 towering palaces appeared. Each of the towering palaces measured twenty-five yōjanas, and from each towering palace, there emerged twenty-five million birds, with golden crests and golden beaks and golden faces.

“They uttered human speech:

‘When you, O King, cut that tree,
the deed that you did was not good.
In place of a hundred million trees,
there came to be just twenty-four.

You did not know what sort of being
is the one who planted this tree.
Due to this wicked act, you will later
undergo unpleasant results.’

“The king said:

‘I do not know the meaning of this.
Thus, Great Ascetic, please explain.’

“The birds said:

‘It is he who illuminates the world
and will become its guide.

From the prison that is saṃsāra,
he liberates all beings.'

"The king said:

'The person whose tree did not grow,
that second person, who was he?
What wicked action did he do?
Twice-Born Birds, let it be told.'

"The birds said:

'The person whose tree did not grow,
that was the foolish Deva-dāta.
Not having done even slight virtues,
how is a person's tree to grow?'

"Then at that time, at that moment, after the thirty million ministers heard this dharma-paryāya, they were all established on the ten grounds. They each gained clairvoyance. The king too was established on the ten grounds and attained a clear realization of virtuous Dharma."

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaiṣajya-sēna said to the Blessed One, "Blessed One, due to what cause and what condition have the thirty-three million ministers come to abide on the ten grounds and gain clairvoyance?"

The Blessed One said, "Bhaiṣajya-sēna, listen and I will explain."

And then at that time, the Blessed One displayed a smile.

After that, at that time, from the face of the Blessed One there shone forth rays of light of many varied colors: 84,000 rays of hundreds of thousands of colors, such as blue, yellow, red, white, crimson, crystal and silver light rays. They came forth and lit up limitless, boundless world systems. When they returned, they circumambulated the

Blessed One three times and disappeared into the crown of the head of the Blessed One.

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna arose, placed his upper robe over one shoulder, set his right knee on the ground, bowed with his palms together toward the Blessed One and said the following to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, since tathāgatas, arhats, perfect and complete buddhas do not smile without cause and without conditions, what is the cause of the smile and what are the conditions?”

The Blessed One said, “Bhaishajya-sēna, do you see groups of beings from all the world systems of the four directions coming toward me?”

He said, “Blessed One, I do not see them.”

The Blessed One said, “Bhaishajya-sēna, in that case, examine carefully and look at the groups of beings.”

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna looked all about, and he saw that to the east there appeared a tree measuring some 7,000 yōjanas. Twenty-five thousand million groups of people were assembled on one side of it. The people did not speak. They did not talk. They did not converse. They did not eat. They did not arise. They did not move about. They sat in silence.

To the south, there appeared a tree measuring some 7,000 yōjanas. Twenty-five thousand million groups of people were assembled by it. These people did not talk and did not speak either. They did not speak at all. They did not converse at all. They did not arise. They did not move about. They sat in silence.

To the west, there appeared a tree measuring some 7,000 yōjanas. Twenty-five thousand million groups of people were assembled by it. These people did not talk either. They did not speak. They did not speak at all. They did not converse at all. They did not arise. They did not move about. They sat in silence.

To the north, there appeared a tree measuring some 7,000 yójanas. Twenty-five thousand million groups of people were assembled by it. These people did not talk either. They did not speak. They did not speak at all. They did not converse at all. They did not arise. They did not move about. They sat in silence.

In the downward direction, there appeared a tree measuring some 7,000 yójanas. Twenty-five thousand million groups of people were assembled by it. Those people did not talk either. They did not talk. They did not speak. They did not speak at all. They did not converse at all. They did not arise. They did not move about. They sat in silence.

In the upward direction, there appeared a tree measuring some 7,000 yójanas. Twenty-five thousand million groups of people were assembled by it. Those people did not talk either. They did not talk. They did not speak. They did not speak at all. They did not converse at all. They did not arise. They did not move about. They sat in silence.

Thereupon the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna said to the Blessed One, “If the Blessed One would grant me the opportunity to pose a question and then have it explained, I would like to ask a question of the Blessed One, the Tathágata, the Arhat, the Perfect and Complete Buddha, regarding a certain point in question.”

He said this, and the Blessed One spoke to the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna as follows: “Bhaishajya-séna, ask whatever you wish, and I will delight your mind with an explanation of whatever is asked.”

He spoke thus, and the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna said the following to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, for what purpose did many groups of people from the worlds in the four directions come and remain here, and then from between the lower and upper directions, 50,000 million groups of beings came and remain here. What is the reason for this? What are the conditions?”

The Blessed One said, “Bhaishajya-séna, go yourself and ask the tathāgatas in the world systems from which they came.”

He said, “Through the production of whose supernatural power should I go?”

The Blessed One said, “Produce your own supernatural power and go through that.”

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna circumambulated the Blessed One three times and disappeared right there. After passing ninety-six million world systems, he arrived at the world system called Chandra-pradīpa. There, the Blessed One, the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Perfect and Complete Buddha Chandrávati-kshētra was teaching the Dharma, seated in front and completely surrounded by 80,000 million bodhisattvas.

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna remained before the Blessed One, the Tathāgata Chandrávati-kshētra. With his palms together he bowed down toward the Blessed One and then said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, why is it that I do not see here presently the groups of people who are presently gathering from the ten directions and coming into the presence of the Shakyamuni Tathāgata in the Saha world system?”

The Blessed One said, “Bhaishajya-sēna, they wander about and abide right there.”

He said, “But, Blessed One, how is that?”

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna went up to where the Tathāgata Chandrávati-kshētra was. Once he had arrived, he sat before that tathāgata.

He said the following to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, I passed 96,000 million world systems and have come here and, Blessed One, nowhere have I seen as many sentient beings as those that are seen there.”

The Blessed One said, “Those sentient beings arose from mindless trees.”

He said, “Blessed One, who has seen or heard of arising from trees that have no mind?”

The Blessed One said, “Bhaishajya-séna, have you not seen or heard of the arising of people from mindless trees?”

He said, “Blessed One, I have not seen or heard of that.”

The Blessed One said, “Bhaishajya-séna, if you wish to see, I will show you now.”

He said: “Blessed One, I wish to. Sugata, I wish to.”

Thereupon the Tathāgata Chandrávati-kshétra extended his arm and from that arm 100,000 million groups of beings arose. Each of those groups of people extended one hundred arms and scattered incense, garlands and various lotions as offerings to the Tathāgata, and the Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, do you see this group of people scattering incense, garlands and lotions as offerings to the Tathāgata?”

He said: “Blessed One, I see them. Sugata, I see them.”

The Blessed One said: “These groups of beings who arose are mindless. These people are mindless.”

Then each of those 100,000 million human beings had 100 arms, and they all fell down.

Then when the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna had seen that, he said to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, what is this? Sugata, what is this, that the people’s hundred arms fall down in an instant, too? Blessed One, if even the hundred-armed ones are not liberated, what need is there to mention those with two arms?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, similarly, the sentient beings are born mindlessly. They cease mindlessly. Bhaishajya-séna, you should know that this body also comes about mindlessly.”

He said: “Blessed One, regarding these sentient beings, which are young? Which are old?”

The Blessed One said, “Bhaishajya-séna, there are young sentient beings, and there are also old sentient beings.”

He said: “Blessed One, which are young? Which are old?”

The Blessed One said: “Those who were falling down just now are old. Those who were born from the trees are young.”

He said, “Blessed One, I wish to see the young sentient beings.”

At that, the Tathāgata Chandrávati-kshétra extended the palm of his right hand, and thereupon there came 100,000 million groups of people from each of the ten directions. From the lower and upper directions, there came fifty million groups of people each. When these groups of people had arrived, they prostrated with their heads at the feet of the Blessed One. After that, they did not speak to the Tathāgata. They did not speak at all. They sat in silence.

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, why is it that these sentient beings do not speak to the Blessed One, do not speak at all and remain without speaking?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, do you not understand? The land is mindless, and it does not speak. It does not speak at all and it does not understand the heap of Dharma either. If you should wonder why that is so, Bhaishajya-séna, some young sentient beings here do not understand birth, although they have seen it. Cessation, aging, sickness, sorrow, weeping, separation from loved ones, coming into contact with what is unpleasant, parting with friends, dying, untimely death — they do not understand any of these unbearable sufferings. Even though they have seen them, they are not moved and revolted by them, so how could they possibly understand them? Bhaishajya-séna, they must be taught again and again.”

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna said this to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, from where have these young sentient beings who do not know the Dharma come? From where did they migrate at death, and where will they be born?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, listen. These human bodies that they have received were not made by a jeweler. They were not made by a coppersmith. They were not made by a carpenter. They were not made by a potter. They were not made out of fear of a king. Rather, they arise from the union of a man and woman, and from the possession of bad karma. Those sentient beings too are taught a trade again and again, and because of that, endless, unbearable sufferings and unbearable feelings arise. In that, they experience the ripening of wicked, non-virtuous actions done previously. Bhaishajya-séna, in this place, these sentient beings who have come here and are not rising up will feel these sorts of suffering. Bhaishajya-séna, for this reason they do not speak. They do not speak at all. Bhaishajya-séna, that being so, these young sentient beings do not understand virtue. They do not understand birth. They do not understand cessation. They will not attain human bodies even, and these, Bhaishajya-séna, are what are called ‘young sentient beings.’”

He said: “Blessed One, how are these young sentient beings born? How do they cease?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, it is as follows: To make an analogy, some man might bring a piece of wood into contact with fire. Just as that wood would gradually catch on fire, in the same way, Bhaishajya-séna, one is initially born into a human body. After birth, one then experiences sensations.”

He said: “Blessed One, who is actually born here? After birth, who completely passes beyond?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, the Buddha himself is born. The Tathāgata himself completely passes beyond. It is as follows: To make an analogy, the king puts some man in bondage and imprisons

him in a dark and gloomy building. After the man enters that gloomy building, once inside that gloomy building, he sees that it is a gloomy building. Then another man who has previously been affected by some experience of suffering sees this and thinks, 'This man is ill-suited for this. Because he has not experienced suffering previously, it will kill him.' Reflecting on this, he took fire and went there and left a slight bit of fire behind in that house. The man who had been put in that jail saw the fire, and when he saw it, he was consoled and cheered up. But that fire for some reason flared up, and this blazing fire completely burnt up that house, and the man was also burnt up right there. Then, when the king heard that he had been burnt, he was displeased. He thought, 'From now on, no sentient being will be put in prison in my land.'

"Thinking in this way, the king then said to the sentient beings dwelling in his land: 'O you sentient beings, have no fear. Do not be afraid. You should not fear. From now on, in my land, there will be no corporal punishment or imprisonment. No sentient being will be deprived of life. O sentient beings, have no fear.'

"Just as he reassured them, so too, Bhaishajya-sēna, the Tathāgata, who has burnt up all the delusions, has entirely pacified all illness. Just as that man burned his own body too through the burning of the building, and having set out for the sake of sentient beings' aims, benefit and happiness, he completely liberates sentient beings who are bound from their bondage, likewise too the Tathāgata abandoned the stains of attachment, anger and ignorance, and having arisen in the world like a lamp for all sentient beings, he completely liberates sentient beings from the bodies of hell beings, animals, pre-tas and āsuras, and he also completely liberates young sentient beings and old sentient beings, too."

At that, these verses emerged from the space above:

The Conqueror's field is a wondrous field,
a wholesome field and well-prepared.

Any seed planted in it
will not go to waste at all.

The Conqueror's field is a pure land.
The teachings of the Buddha are praised.
In order to embrace all beings,
the Teacher also makes the means.

Though he abides in the sphere of nirvana,
he appears upon the face of the earth.
After perpetually pacifying the world,
Buddha purifies the objects given.

He liberates the young beings.
He liberates the old ones, too.
From the three realms, gradually,
he frees all beings completely.

He closes the doors to the hells.
He liberates animals and pretas.
Having made peace in this world,
he creates happiness in the next.

Then the Blessed One displayed a smile and said:

‘It is excellent to see those who are excellent,
and seeing buddhas is excellent.
The holy Dharma, a field of qualities —
this also is excellent.
To see the Saṅgha assembled is excellent.
The teaching of the Saṅghāta is also excellent.
Destroying misdeeds is excellent.’

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaiṣajya-sēna bowed down with his palms together toward the Blessed One and said to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, what is the reason for smiling? What are the conditions?”

The Blessed One said, “Child of the lineage, do you see these young sentient beings?”

He said: “Blessed One, I see them. Sugata, I see them.”

The Blessed One said, “Bhaishajya-séna, all of them will be established on the ten grounds on this very day.”

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna remains in the sky above at a height of 80,000 yójanas, and 80,000 million devas release a rain of flowers on the Blessed One. The young sentient beings too make prostrations with palms joined. Then the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna said these words while remaining in the sky above. He fills the galaxy of a billion world systems with sound. The sentient beings born in the thirty-two great hells hear the sound. The thirty-two types of devas hear that sound. The galaxy of a billion world systems also trembled in six ways. In the great oceans, 84,000 nagas were also shaken. Thirty thousand million rākshasas came to this planet. Twenty-five thousand million pretas, yakshas and rākshasas came from the royal city of Adākavati, and this huge assembly gathered before the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One taught the Dharma to the young sentient beings, and 100,000 million bodhisattvas came from the world systems of the ten directions, each by their own supernatural power.

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna bowed down placing his palms together toward the Blessed One and said to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, many are the bodhisattvas that have gathered and are here. Sugata, there are many. Blessed One, many too are the devas and nagas that have gathered and are here. From the royal city of Adākavati, many millions of rākshasas also arrived, assembled and are here.”

Then the Blessed One said to the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna, “Child of the lineage, come down.”

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna descended from the space above by supernatural powers, placed his palms together and bowed down toward the Blessed One. He said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, ‘the mass of Dharma,’ ‘the mass of Dharma’ that is spoken of, Blessed One, of what extent is this ‘mass of Dharma?’”

The Blessed One said: “Child of the lineage, it is called the ‘mass of Dharma’ when one unequivocally strives for celibacy and also when, having unequivocally striven for celibacy, one abandons all wickedness. Child of the lineage, do you see the young beings who, having abandoned impure conduct, will undoubtedly attain dhārani and will also all become endowed with all the dharmas?”

He said, “Blessed One, by what means are all these many sentient beings gathering and listening to the mass of Dharma?”

At that, the Blessed One said to the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna: “Bhaishajya-sēna, most sentient beings do not hear that birth as such is suffering. They do not hear that aging as such is suffering. They do not hear that sickness as such is suffering, that sorrow is suffering, weeping is suffering, separation from loved ones and coming into contact with what is disagreeable is suffering. Death, after all these sufferings, steals away body and life. Bhaishajya-sēna, these are what are called ‘all sufferings.’”

Then those young sentient beings, having heard this teaching, bowed down with their palms together toward the Blessed One and said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, we too will die?”

The Blessed One said, “You and all sentient beings will die.”

They said, “Blessed One, how will our time of death bear down on us?”

The Blessed One said: “Children of the lineage, at the time of death, at the last moment of consciousness, there is a wind called ‘causing cessation of consciousness,’ a wind called ‘confusing the consciousness,’ and a wind called ‘disturbing the consciousness.’ And, children of the lineage, at the time of death, in the final moment of consciousness,

these three winds will stir up, they will confuse and they will cause disturbances.”

They said, “Blessed One, what are the three winds that destroy the body at the time of death, when the consciousness ceases?”

The Blessed One said, “Friends, ‘weapon,’ ‘compelling’ and ‘injuring’ cause the destruction of the body.”

They said, “Blessed One, what sort of thing is this that is called ‘the body’?”

The Blessed One said: “Friends, it is also called ‘completely ablaze,’ ‘burnt,’ ‘mucus,’ ‘belching,’ ‘cremation ground,’ ‘vile mind,’ ‘a heavy burden,’ ‘tortured by birth,’ ‘violently shaken by birth,’ ‘tormenting one’s life-force,’ and ‘causing death and separation from loved ones.’ Friends, these are what is called ‘the body.’”

They said: “Blessed One, how does one die? How does one live on?”

The Blessed One said: “Friends, what is called ‘consciousness’ dies. Long-Lived Ones, what is called ‘merit’ lives on. Friends, what is called ‘the body’ dies, bound with millions of sinews, endowed with 84,000 pores, connected with 12,000 parts and supported by 360 bones. Eighty-four types of parasites live inside the body. And there is death for all these living beings; there is death, which is cessation. When a person dies, all those living beings also have their hopes dashed. Then, because all the living beings eat one another, this moves and disturbs the winds. At that time they will experience suffering. Some will grieve for their sons. Some will grieve for their daughters. Some will grieve for their companions. They will all be pierced by agonizing pains. They will try to eat one another, and then when they have eaten one another, two living beings are left and these two fight for seven days. After seven days have passed, one living being is destroyed. The other is freed.

“Long-Lived Ones, if you should wonder what it is that is called ‘Dharma,’ what do you think? Just as these living beings clashed with

one another and then died, in the same way, childish ordinary individuals also clash with one another. They are not frightened by birth. They are not frightened by aging. They are not frightened by sickness. They are not frightened by death. Just as the two living beings fought, so too do childish ordinary individuals fight one another. Then, at the time of death, virtuous people say to them: ‘Person, in what are you trusting? Have you not seen even the slightest shortcomings? Have you not seen the shortcomings of birth? Have you not seen the shortcomings of aging and sickness? Have you not seen the shortcomings of death?’

“They said: ‘Long-Lived One, we have seen the shortcomings of birth, and we have seen the shortcomings of aging and sickness. We have seen the shortcomings of death too, at the end of it all.’”

“They said: ‘Why did you not engage in activities to create roots of virtue? Why did you not create the roots of virtue of the mass of Dharma that increases happiness in both worlds? Friends, I ask a second time: Why did you not create the collection of virtue that would emancipate you completely from birth and death? Why did you not make any investigation as to where you should correctly direct your attention? How did you not hear the sound of the beating of the gong on the earth? Have you not seen the sowing of seeds in the field of the Tathāgata and the giving of incense, garlands and lamps? Have you not seen as well the offering of food and drink to the Tathāgata, or the contentment of the four groups of followers – bhikṣus, bhikṣunis, male holders of lay precepts and female holders of lay precepts – these four groups of followers who are fully devoted to the teachings?’”

“They would speak like that to him and make accusations in order to benefit him, and ‘Your Majesty, you did not do even the slightest thing.’ ‘Man, after coming to this planet earth, you have committed non-virtuous actions.’”

“At that time the Dharma king granted teachings to the dead person in verses:

‘You have seen a tathāgata arise
and heard the beating of the gong.
You have heard the teaching of Dharma
that goes to the peace of nirvana.
Nevertheless, you did not act.’

“At that, the man spoke in reply:

‘I was of a childish mind,
coming under the sway of wicked friends.
With a mind befuddled by desire,
I committed wicked acts.

I followed my desires as well,
and took the lives of living beings.
I wasted even what belongs to the Saṅgha.
Unbearable is the fruit that comes from that.
With a mind that would do harm,
I caused the destruction of stupas,
I uttered too abusive words,
Even my mother, I tormented.
Of what I did with my body
the shortcomings I recognize.

In the great Hell of Lamenting,
extremely unbearable rebirths I see.
I will feel the sensations of Crushing Hell.
Likewise I will experience sensations
in the Extremely Hot Hell,
and in unbearable Mahāvīci.

Split open in Great Lotus Hell, and
as a hell being, into these sufferings,
in the greatly fearsome ‘Marked with Black Lines,’
I will be born one hundred times.

After they are killed, hell beings
again will see those frightful things.
Over and over, they will fall
one hundred yōjanas into great dangers
and they will not find any way out.
Later, they will plunge into darkness.
In the hell that bears the name 'Razor,'
a thousand razors will arise.

They will be born in front of razors,
in the hundreds of thousands of millions.
Due to faulty deeds I have done,
my body will be sliced by them.

The body will be destroyed completely
by unbearable great and churning winds.
Continually in hells like these
I will experience suffering.
All these beings will see me,
my body in tremendous pain.

I took away others' wealth, as well,
in order to sustain my household.
O my sons and my daughters,
brothers and sisters, similarly,
father, mother likewise too,
many friends and relatives,
and servants and laborers,
and cattle, livestock and assistants:
I went astray toward aims that were bad.

For vessels of gold and silver, and
likewise for soft, fine garments,
and setting out to make a home:
through all of these, I went astray.
A very splendid house I built,
with men and women, lounging about.

I went astray through the lute and cymbal,
 my uncontrolled mind filled with delight.
 Though my body was washed in scented waters,
 even now it still lacks gratitude.

Body, you are mindless, but
 for your sake I went astray.
 In the future, not one sole being
 will become my protector,
 when a great and churning wind
 unbearably ravishes my body.

Likewise I ate exquisite tasty foods,
 savoring variety with my tongue.
 Around my head were bound extremely many
 well-made garlands, lovely ones.

By beauty my eyes were led astray.
 There is no protection for the eyes.

The eyes are the cause of those misdeeds
 I committed after I had seen.
 My ears are the cause for which
 hands were torn and cut by diamonds.

On both my arms were fastened bracelets.
 Rings were placed upon my fingers.
 About my throat were strands of pearls.
 Even both legs were heavily adorned.

Chain anklets were fashioned for them,
 and on them too there rested gold.
 My body had diverse gems upon it,
 and likewise too were bands of gold.

Amusing myself with my great wealth,
 my mind became extremely attached.

Once I had touched very smooth things,
with strong craving, I kept them close.

I also placed my body atop
a variety of carpets and beddings.
After bathing in excellent fragrant waters,
I anointed my body with fragrance.

I scented the air with incense
of divine camphor and sandalwood.
I beautified my complexion.
I daubed myself lavishly with musk.

After anointing myself with scented antique oils,
and jasmine and chāmpaka flowers,
I clothed myself in garments of
fine, white Benares muslin.

After coming down from the back of an elephant,
I mounted atop the back of a horse.
I thought of myself as a king.
People scurried in front of me.

I was excessively familiar with female attendants
who were highly trained in song and dance.
Wild animals who had done no harm,
with arrows I struck and killed.

Because I did not know of future lives,
I committed wicked acts like these.
I ate the flesh of other beings,
and thus this suffering of mine
will become unbearable.
But I did not understand death.
I was of a childish mind,
and so I nourished my body.

Now that death has come to me today,
I have no one at all as a protector.
All you friends and relatives,
why do you look into my face?

For what do you wear tattered mourning clothes?
For what do you weep and lament out loud?
For what do you loosen and dishevel your hair?
For what do you draw blood in grief?

For what do you scatter dust about the head?
For what do you beat your breast?
During my lifetime I ought to have
abandoned wickedness. Why are you in anguish?

My body has become the food
of jackals, dogs, crows and birds.
It is of no use to nourish this body.
It is the property of the serpent of death,
and thus a person will continually be born.

The medicine that frees one from this fear —
that is the sort of medicine to take.
The medicine that the doctors gave:
that is not of use to me.
Give me now, at my dying time,
the medicine of Dharma that sets one free
from the serpent of the delusions.

Do not give flesh to me.
Though this body has been nurtured so,
it will be destroyed, inevitably.
Since it bestows suffering,
why take up this heap of wickedness?
This body, though tended with great care,
will engage in vicious acts.

Son and daughter, for what reason
do you gaze upon me with your eyes?
Protect me from this illness!
O my son and my daughter,
why do you weep pointlessly?
Do nothing unworthy for my sake.
In order to support you,
I even plundered others' wealth.

Now that my death time has arrived,
it is hopeless. What to do?

I am terrified of birth and lower realms.
I am completely crushed by dying as well.
I feel acutely the sense of touch,
of discrimination, sensations and condition

Due to craving, childish beings wander
and reach unbearable results.
Birth into bad families:
There too one is bound to grief.

Knowing I had little merit,
I caused trouble for others.
My generosity and ethics deteriorated completely,
and I turned my back on the Dharma.
Because I did not understand rebirth,
I was deluded by the serpent of delusion.

Due to ignorance, childish beings wander
where there is no liberation.
Not knowing the meaning of liberation,
confused, they commit wicked acts.

Due to delusions, childish beings wander,
their minds continually disturbed.
In the body that has various types of bonds,
fire blazes and burns it up.

In places where there is no happiness,
confused, the body utterly wanders.
It does not know that happiness
from which utter happiness arises.

The field of the Buddha that gives happiness,
the wheel of the Dharma that is the supreme medicine,
ethical conduct that is true ethics:
These are the pure voice of the Tathāgata.”

Then the Blessed One spoke to the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna as follows: “Bhaishajya-sēna, although sentient beings weep and lament at their time of death, no one will be their protector except for the ripening of the results of good actions they have done.”

The Blessed One spoke these words and uttered the following verses as well:

By committing wicked acts,
they fall into sentient beings’ hells.
They will be dressed in burning garments.
In their thirst, they will drink molten iron.

Burning embers will fall on their bodies.
Once burnt, in the extremely unbearable
greatly terrifying hells,
their bodies will be set ablaze.

They will not know happiness.
They will not know Dharma either in any way.
Due to what is not Dharma, childish beings wander,
not finding even the slightest happiness.

Those who have faith and ethics in abundance,
possess wisdom and great austerity,
and associate with virtuous friends —
these will swiftly become a tathāgata.

To arise as a buddha in the world,
supreme joyful effort must be made,
all sentient beings held within one's care,
and one must teach the Dharma of virtuous action.

On loving thoughts, and likewise too,
on supreme celibacy remain focused.
Bhaishajya-sēna, after having heard this speech,
you should practice this supremely.

Seeing liberation, and enlightened, and
the leader whose speech is acclaimed,
and the father and the mother of the world:
He is called 'bodhicitta.'

A virtuous friend who teaches this Dharma
in the world is supremely rare.
Those who listen with respect to the teachings of Buddha
will become unsurpassed buddhas gone-to-bliss.

Those who are respectful
toward the peaceful buddhas' heirs
will also become the protectors of the world,
releasing all sentient beings.

At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna said this to the Blessed One, "Blessed One, why are the cliff sides here trembling, greatly trembling?"

He said this, and the Blessed One said to the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna, "Bhaishajya-sēna, look and see."

The bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna looked and saw fissures in the earth in the four directions. He saw twenty million people appear from the ravines that had been opened by the fissures in the earth. He saw twenty million people appear from below, and twenty-five million people appear from above. Then those young beings observed that and said to the Blessed One, "Blessed One, who are these born here?"

The Blessed One said, “Look at this group of beings.”

They said, “Blessed One, we see them.”

The Blessed One said, “This group of beings was born for the sake of your happiness.”

They said, “Will these sentient beings die, too?”

The Blessed One said: “Friends, that is so. All sentient beings will die.”

Then the previous young sentient beings, those who were born first, bowed down with their palms together toward the Blessed One and said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, we would not like to see birth and death again.”

The Blessed One said, “Well then, would you like to acquire the power of joyful effort?”

They said: “May we see the Tathāgata directly. Then may we listen to the Dharma that we have requested to hear and that is delightful. May we see the assembly of the Tathāgata’s śrāvaka Saṅgha. May we see the bodhisattvas who have great supernatural abilities and great power. Blessed One, these are the sorts of things we like. We do not like to look at birth and death.”

Then, through supernatural powers, the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna and 500 other bodhisattvas arose from their seats simultaneously, and all arose into the space above through supernatural powers. They sat cross-legged and concentrated. From all of their bodies, lions appeared. Tigers appeared. Snakes appeared. Elephants appeared. They revealed a display of great supernatural powers. On the mountain too, they sat cross-legged and went upwards a distance of 20,000 yōjanas. They caused 10,000 million moons and suns to descend as well.

Then the young sentient beings said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, what is the reason and what are the conditions for there being

light rays and for the great supernatural displays appearing in the world?”

The Blessed One said, “Children of the lineage, look at the moon and sun appearing.”

They said: “Blessed One, we see them. Sugata, we see them.”

The Blessed One said: “As for these, bodhisattvas display light rays shining from their own bodies and supernatural powers and magical transformations. After they display them, they teach the Dharma to sentient beings for the benefit of many beings, for the happiness of many beings, out of compassionate affection for the world, and for the aims, benefit and happiness of the great collections of beings and devas and humans. After displaying here human bodies, strength and joyful effort, they demonstrate such sorts of powers.”

They said, “Blessed One, please give a Dharma teaching in order to bring about the appearance of light rays shining.”

As soon as they said this, the Blessed One said to the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna, “Bhaishajya-séna, did you see the galaxy of a billion world systems tremble in six ways?”

He said: “Blessed One, I have seen it. Sugata, I have seen it.”

And he was considering, ‘What if I were to ask the Tathágata about this point?’ As he thought thus, the Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, ask whatever you wish, and I will satisfy your mind with an explanation of whatever you ask. I will teach. I will analyze. Bhaishajya-séna, I will show all that belongs to the past, future and present times.”

He said: “Blessed One, please teach in order to clear away our doubts. Blessed One, I see the Tathágata surrounded by 84,000 children of the devas, 84,000 million bodhisattvas, 12,000 million naga kings, 18,000 million bhutas and 25,000 million pretas and pisháchas.”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-sēna, without a doubt, these sentient beings have gathered in an assembly before me and sat down in order to hear the Dharma. Bhaishajya-sēna, on this very day they will overcome cyclic existence. Out of a wish to benefit all sentient beings, on this very day they will attain the ten grounds. Having been established on the ten grounds, they will attain the sphere of nirvana.

For the sake of liberation from aging and death,
after doing deeds to bring about happiness
and to vanquish the noose of the delusions,
they will accomplish the Buddha’s teachings.”

He said: “Blessed One, many abodes for sentient beings have arisen due to various karmas. Why do they remain surrounding the Blessed One?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-sēna, listen.

Sentient beings, who are confused and do not know:
How could they become free?
These many young sentient beings
today will attain dhāranis.

In order to attain the ten grounds,
they will come to fully know all dharmas,
and they will attain those ten grounds.
They will perform the activities of a buddha.

They will turn the wheel of the Dharma.
They will release a rain of Dharma.
Thus, since beings have gathered,
my teaching will be delightful.

Devas and nagas and pretas,
and terribly unbearable āsuras
will be established on the ten grounds.
They will proclaim the sound of the Dharma.

They will beat the Dharma gong.
They will sound the Dharma conch.
These young sentient beings also will
have the power of joyful effort.

Just as the Tathāgata attained it,
so will they attain the Dharma today.”

Then 5,000 of the young beings arose from their seat, placed their palms together, bowed down in the direction of the Blessed One and said to the Blessed One:

“Since there is no end found
to bondage within saṃsāra,
the body is a heavy burden, Blessed One,
greatly fearful, unbearable.

We find no path whatsoever.
Indeed no path is seen, and thus,
Protector, since we are blind,
we ask you to gather us in.

To you, the Hero, we make requests.
May the Guide teach the Dharma.
We were born with little wisdom
and find no happiness at all.

Please do teach the Dharma to us.
From unbearable suffering, set us free.
Wherever it is that we are born,
may we see a Buddha there.”

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaiṣajya-sēna went to where the young beings were and said the following:

“Have something to eat.
Have some wonderful tasting drinks.

Later when your fear has gone,
listen to the Dharma fearlessly.

They said:

“Venerable elder, who are you?
We ourselves do not know you.
We see that you are beautiful,
your form is serene and your fame great.

You are released from the great fears
of the world of pretas, hell beings and animals.
Just like one who beautifies the world,
all your negativity is pacified.

We see a vessel in your hand,
made of seven precious substances,
and a cord of jewels on your body,
ornamented with a mass of radiance.

To the words spoken by you who are peaceful,
we are unable to offer any reply.
We do not need any food,
nor do we need delicious drinks.

From food what emerges is excrement.
Likewise, what is drunk becomes urine.
Juices transform into blood.
In the same way, from blood comes flesh.

Thus, we do not need even
nicely prepared food and drinks,
nor do we need fine garments
of woven silk or woolen cloth.

Golden bracelets we do not need.
We have no need of strands of pearls.

On our fingers, we need no rings.
All these are transient in nature.

We seek a life that does not go
to migrations that are bad.
We strive for the devas' happiness
and for the giving of Dharma.

Virtuous friends are what we need,
not to be wheel-turning kings.
Having left behind a lovely continent,
wheel-turning kings will also die.

Sons will not follow after them,
nor will wives or daughters.
The seven precious things will be left behind;
they will not follow after them.

Though they gather many people to them,
these will not follow along behind.
No one will scurry in front of them,
nor will it be thus later on.

After being a king for just one life,
due to impermanence, they will wander.
Due to having done many wicked acts,
they will fall into the Howling Hell.

After being surrounded on all four sides
by seven jewels and by amazing power,
when the time for the Howling Hell ripens,
where will that amazing power be?

Since they are nowhere to be found on earth,
having died, they cannot display these powers.
Elder, please listen to us:
Please go to where the Tathāgata is.

We earnestly wish to see him,
just like a mother or father.
We do not have any mother,
nor have we a father or siblings.

The Tathāgata is chief in this world.
He is father and mother.
He is the sun and the moon.
He reveals the path to happiness.

He liberates us from saṃsāra,
so that we are not reborn later.
He is the boat that saves us from the river,
and the terrifying river of the delusions.

By him, beings are completely freed.
They will not come back again.
He who shows supreme enlightenment
explains the holy Dharma, too.

We do not have need of food.
We do not wish the result of a kingdom.
Those who fear the realms of hell
should not go to the devas' world.

The life of a human is happy:
there the All-Knowing One appears.
Due to harmful actions one has done oneself,
one's life is short and one wanders.

They do not know death, but they know
kingdoms and the enjoyments they desire.
Those deceived by birth and death
do not know and have no fear.

Those confused by impermanence
do not know the subtle Dharma.

They do not perform subtle duties,
and do not know the sphere of peace.

As they face death, they feel no remorse.
Again and again, they are reborn,
for a long time, overwhelmed with suffering,
continually beaten up with sticks, and then
they will steal from others, too.
Likewise they will be bound and killed.
Compelled by previous wickedness,
they are bound with the five bonds.

Their hopes also will be cut off.
They will be pierced with pangs of pain.
When their consciousness is ceased,
pitifully they will lament:

‘Who will be my protector?
Gold and silver and crystal —
all my wealth I will offer.
I will even become a servant.
In the way that servants do,
I will perform any and all tasks.’

We don’t need kingdoms or property,
nor either wealth or even grain.
We do not need our own body;
those who act badly are not freed.
This being so, O Elder,
we do not have need for food.

Those who eat delicious foods,
even kings, will also die.
Those who drink the best of drinks,
deva sons, will also die.

Food and drink prepared with skill
and of many varied flavors,

are placed before the king, and then,
with his tongue, he touches them.

Then kings become attached to tastes
and commit not minor wicked acts,
attached to transitory tastes
that are lacking in essence.

We do not have need of drink,
nor do we have need of food.
What we need is such Dharma itself
that liberates us from suffering.

In the one who is released from bondage to craving,
freed from bondage to delusions,
and fully freed from all bondage:
In that Buddha we take refuge.

We wish to go for refuge
to the great Sage who protects the world.
We also wish to go to prostrate
to the one who is joyful for beings to behold.

Since we do not know your name,
please tell us your illustrious name.”

Bhaishajya-sēna said:

“You and all beings likewise
have the wish to hear the name.
Young beings in the billions
surround the Tathāgata.”

They said:

“You are a disciple of Buddha.
Your name is profoundly well renowned.

Similarly all beings
have the wish to hear your name.”

He said:

“Bhaishajya-sēna is my name.
I am the medicine of sentient beings.

The best of all the medicines,
that one I will teach to you —
the one that pacifies all the sicknesses
that have infected sentient beings.

The sickness of attachment is a great sickness.
Unbearable, it terrifies the world.
The sickness of ignorance is great and fierce,
making one wander mindlessly.

Sentient beings go to hells,
and likewise, among pretas and animals.
These childish beings possessed by anger:
How could they be pacified?”

They said:

“By hearing this virtuous Dharma,
we will be freed from all suffering.
We are of childish mind and ignorant,
but after being freed from all suffering,
we abandoned doing wicked acts.
May we hear the gift of Dharma.
Having given up all wicked acts,
we gave up dreadful suffering, too.

May we swiftly see the Perfect Buddha,
the doctor who pacifies all sicknesses.

He is the king of physicians,
curing all those who suffer.

To pay homage to the Tathāgata,
Elder, please do quickly go.
After prostrating, please speak our words
to the Leader of the World.

Pacify fully this disease.
The whole body is fully ablaze.
Pacify this dreadful fire
that burns up and destroys our peace.

The burden of the body is a heavy burden,
an extremely fierce and sharp burden.
For us, who are overwhelmed with suffering,
Oath-bound Ascetic, have compassion.

Beings bear perpetually
the oppressive burden of anger and ignorance.
Not knowing how to be freed of the burden,
they shoulder it time and time again.

Those who do not know the path of freedom
and who do not see freedom's path,
though they are aware of death,
still this does not produce fear.

Thinking, 'I will never die,'
those who rest comfortably
are thoroughly confused.
Due to that, although they see
their mother die, they are unaware.

Some do not recall their father,
continually oppressed by disease and
disturbed by delusions and karma.
How in this case are we to eat?

Ignorant and worn out by suffering,
we are exhausted pointlessly.
Suffering like this of yours
arises on the basis of ignorance.

Discrimination, sensations and
conditioned mental factors are
a great fearful, heavy burden.

Due to craving, childish beings wander
thoroughly, unaware of Dharma.
Surrounded by the burden of the body,
they are born into the world meaninglessly.

They need clean, exquisite clothes,
water to bathe in and lotions.
They will need delicious food
that is gratifying to the body.

The ear likewise makes one seek out
the five attractive musical instruments.
The eyes makes one attached to figures
made of the seven precious substances.

The tongue also makes one search out
all the delicious flavors.
The body makes one continually seek
soft and light objects to touch.

The body attains a flesh-coupling,
even with pleasure, and from that,
this mindless body is produced.
Who would find pleasure in that?

In wearing very fine footwear,
therein my feet do find pleasure.
Yet when it comes the time to die,
these clothes and lotions offer no protection.

Since even the body is no protection,
no need to speak of clothes and lotion.

What is called 'human' is the body.
It will attain breath and great strength,
the power to listen and analyze.
In that, this body has great qualities.

Formerly I caroused and roamed
always accompanied by horses and elephants.
Since I did not know the Dharma that liberates,
how attached I was to wicked acts!

Since I did not know about future lives,
for my amusement, I had wickedness done.
Again and again I was born.
Again and again death came to me.

Again and again I saw sorrow,
thoroughly bound by lamentation.
I saw also my mothers' deaths.
I saw the deaths of my fathers,
of companions, sisters, children, wives.

Since all that is compounded is empty,
what being with a mind would be attached?
But with my mind captive to desire,
I thought them to be reliable.

I did not observe the peaceful Dharma.
There is no joy whatsoever in death.
Due to a mind obscured by desire,
I did not make offerings.
Thus desire is without equal in wickedness,
and still it has not been turned away.

Mistaken fully, we were born.
Beings are endlessly mistaken.

Mistaken fully, we hear sounds,
holding on to what is not the holy Dharma.

We seek liberation and meditation.
We will not carry the burden of the body.
May we become the chief of beings —
buddhas, teachers — for the sake of the world.

A buddha is mother and father of the world.
A buddha who reveals the path
causes a rain of jewels to fall
everywhere upon the earth.

Foolish beings do not know
of what sort the Dharma collection is.
One who dedicates their mind to enlightenment
will actualize the Dharma collection.

All that is compounded is empty.
Empty too are riches and wealth.
When one sees as empty even oneself,
at that point, one has no hopes.

Elder, Bhaishajya-sēna,
please listen to these words of ours.
For the sake of the bodhisattvas,
we ask you to go as a messenger.

Recalling all the faults of saṃsāra,
bodhisattvas are not fatigued.
Endowed with effort and great austerity,
they will collect all good qualities.

Please go to where the Teacher is —
the Teacher fully awakened into happiness,
the Conqueror who is not even slightly tired.
For our sake, please go say to him:

‘You have conquered Mara and
vanquished him despite his strength.
You quickly set ablaze the Dharma
that supports and holds all sentient beings.’

Since we have not heard the Dharma
by which we will become buddhas,
in order to benefit us,
Elder, we ask that you go quickly.

We have not seen the Tathāgata,
endowed with thirty-two marks.
Until we do, we will not cross over.
Speaking so, we all wait respectfully.”

Bhaiṣajya-sēna said:

“Look above for a moment.
What is it you see up there?”

They looked above and there they saw
three thousand and five hundred
towering palaces in all,
remaining above, all around.
They were decorated exquisitely
with seven gems and were well adorned
with a latticework of jewels.
Inside were flowers in full bloom,
and divine incense wafted down.

At that, they questioned the Elder:

“What is this apparition here
of towering palaces,
with jeweled latticework
and lotus filaments all throughout?”

Bhaishajya-sēna said:

“These places are for you.
Go so that you may see the Buddha.
Bow down to the one who is chief,
who has passed beyond this world,
to the one who illuminates the world.”

They said:

“But we know no path to him,
nor is the Tathāgata seen.
Since we do not know the path,
where shall we go to prostrate?”

Bhaishajya-sēna said:

“Just as space is without bounds
and is not susceptible to being touched,
so it is not possible to go
to bow before the Teacher,
who gives forth nectar.

In just the way Mount Sumēru abides,
so too is the Teacher in his abode.
Mount Sumēru is susceptible to being measured,
as is the depth of the great ocean.

It is possible to count all the specks of dust
found in a galaxy of one billion worlds,
but there is no knowing the arising of buddhas.
Bodhisattvas from the ten directions
bow before him who illuminates the world”

They said:

“Protector of the world, look at us!
Please fulfill our wishes.

We bow down from our hearts
to the Teacher, and from that
may we attain the fruit.”

Bhaishajya-sēna said:

“The Teacher has no attachment to
scents; none to garlands or to lotions.
He upholds the cause of sentient beings,
and by him they will be set free
from conditioned existence.

Those who have subdued their minds
and gone for refuge to Buddha
will not be engaged in battle
by the supremely terrifying Mara.

They will not come under the power of death.
They will quickly attain dhāraṇī.
Their minds will be inspired with pure faith,
and after that, they will see the Teacher.”

Then the Blessed One, the Tathāgata whose voice is delightful like the sound of a kalavinka sparrow, displayed a smile. At that, the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna arose from his seat, bowed down towards the Blessed One with palms joined and said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, 84,000 light rays have come forth from your face, and this galaxy of a billion world systems and everything in it is suffused with these light rays. All thirty-two great hells are suffused with them, too. They are also illuminating thirty-two deva realms. These light rays are of a great variety of colors, such as green, yellow, red, white, crimson, crystal and silver. These light rays, after emerging from the face of the Blessed One, did everything to bring about the happiness of the sentient beings of the galaxy of a billion world systems, and after that they returned, circumambulated the Blessed One seven times and disappeared into the Blessed One’s crown. What is the reason for displaying the smile that brought this

about? What were the conditions?”

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna also said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, if an opportunity were afforded to me, I would like to ask a certain matter of the Blessed One, the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Perfect and Complete Buddha.”

He said this, and the Blessed One said the following to the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna: “Bhaishajya-séna, ask whatever you wish and I will satisfy your mind with an explanation of whatever is asked.”

He said: “Blessed One, after those 30,000 million young beings who arose had understood the teaching of the subtle Dharma of the Tathāgata, they said to the old beings: ‘You old ones do not know the Dharma. You are constantly attached to what is not Dharma and to non-virtue.’ When they say these subtle things that are unpleasant, speak out unreservedly and thus inflict harm, Blessed One, why were they uttering these pleasant and attractive words?”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, do you not know why they speak these words? They speak things that are tender and extremely pleasant for the Tathāgata. Because they have heard the Dharma, Bhaishajya-séna, on account of that, they will understand the meaning of all the Dharma. They will become endowed with all good qualities. They will all realize dhāranis. From today on, they will abide on the ten grounds. Today they will sound the great Dharma drum. Today they will become endowed with the attributes of the great Dharma. Bhaishajya-séna, do you see these towering palaces?”

He said: “Blessed One, I see them. Sugata, I see them.”

The Blessed One said: “Bhaishajya-séna, on this very day, these young beings will be seated inside these towering palaces and will then attain a clear realization of the Dharma. On this very day, they will bring about the completion of all the virtuous dharmas. Today they will beat the great Dharma drum. Today many classes of devas will be made to attain a direct realization of the Dharma. Even many

sentient beings of the hell realm dwelling in wrong realms, having heard the teaching of the Tathāgata's wisdom, will overcome cyclic existence and be victorious. At that time all 90,000 million old beings will attain the fruit of stream-entry, and they will all become endowed with the Dharma, too. Bhaishajya-sēna, they will all completely cast away all sufferings. Bhaishajya-sēna, they will all accomplish the viewing of the Tathāgata. Bhaishajya-sēna, they will all become endowed with the sound of the great Dharma. Bhaishajya-sēna, look in the four directions."

The bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna looked everywhere in the four directions, and from the east, there came as many bodhisattvas as grains of sand in fifty million Ganges rivers. From the south, there came as many bodhisattvas as grains of sand in sixty million Ganges rivers. From the west, there came as many bodhisattvas as grains of sand in seventy million Ganges rivers. From the north, there came as many bodhisattvas as grains of sand in eighty million Ganges rivers. From below, there came as many bodhisattvas as grains of sand in ninety million Ganges rivers, and from above, there came as many bodhisattvas as grains of sand in 100 million Ganges rivers. After they had arrived, they sat down to one side before the Blessed One.

They were seated to one side, and the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-sēna said to the Blessed One, "Blessed One, what are the black forms and red forms visible in the sky above?"

He said: "Bhaishajya-sēna, do you not know what the black forms and red forms seen in the sky are? The Tathāgata knows. Bhaishajya-sēna, this is Mara. Bhaishajya-sēna, do you wish to see?"

He said: "Blessed One, I wish to. Sugata, I wish to."

The Blessed One said, "Bhaishajya-sēna, bodhisattvas equaling the grains of sand in 100 million Ganges rivers have arrived."

He said: “Blessed One, what is the reason for the arrival of these bodhisattvas? What are the conditions?”

“Bhaishajya-séna, the young beings are the condition by which all sentient beings will now become endowed with the Dharma of meditation. Bhaishajya-séna, do you see the sentient beings with various forms who have arrived here and the various blessings that have arrived here through supernatural powers?”

He said: “I see as many bodhisattvas as grains of sand in 100 million Ganges rivers and as many bodhisattvas as grains of sand in hundreds of thousands of myriad millions of Ganges rivers abiding through supernatural powers, and they abide with many forms, many colors and many shapes. Those bodhisattvas abide in the abode of the Arya Dharma. I have seen those bodhisattvas abiding in places of Dharma together with their retinues.”

After the Blessed One had spoken thus, the bodhisattva, the great being Sarva-shūra, the bodhisattva, the great being Bhaishajya-séna, and all the young and old bodhisattvas, along with the entire assembly and the world with its devas, humans, ásuras and gandhárvas rejoiced, and praised the speech of the Blessed One.

The Noble Saṅghāta Sūtra Dharma-paryāya is completed.

Original Colophon:

Translated and edited by the Indian master Jina-mitra and Dana-shīla and the chief editor Lotsawa Pande Yeshe de, and established after correcting with new language.

Colophon:

This English translation from the Tibetan was prepared by Venerable Damchö Diana Finnegan (Lhundup Damchö), after reading the text with Venerable Geshe Lhundub Sopa and then comparing the Tibetan with the Sanskrit. In addition to the invaluable assistance from Geshe Sopa, this translation was checked against the Tibetan with occasional reference to the Chinese translations by Shenghai (Roy) Li, whose copious suggestions vastly improved this translation. Painstaking proofreading and copy-editing was offered in the final stage by Venerable Gyalten Mindrol and Sara Blumenthal, FPMT Education Department. Many others generously contributed to this text, but all faults are the translator's. The translation was completed on January 25, 2006, in the home of Lama Zopa Rinpoche in Aptos, California. This edition was finalized, with typographical errors corrected, on August 31st, 2006, in Visakhapatnam, India.

Translator's Dedication:

May the kindness of the Buddha, as embodied within this wondrous sūtra, fill the hearts of all beings and turn them all to virtue. Just as this Saṅghāta Sūtra has existed for many centuries until now in the world only to benefit, may the Buddhadharmas remain for eons more, to bring comfort and aid to all.

Appendices

Appendix A

A Brief History of the Saṅghāta Sūtra

The Saṅghāta Sūtra comes into your hands through a long chain of interdependent arisings — a chain that was very nearly broken. For many centuries, the Saṅghāta Sūtra was actively recited, copied, translated, and treasured both in India and across central Asia. However, all this activity seems to have stopped some time after the tenth century ce, when the Saṅghāta fell into obscurity.

The Saṅghāta was first written down in Sanskrit. As with all other Buddhist sūtras, it is assumed to have circulated orally for quite a long time before it was committed to paper — or, in the case of the Saṅghāta, to palm leaves and birch bark, the medium on which most manuscripts were written in India.

After circulating in Sanskrit for some time, the Saṅghāta was subsequently translated into all the major languages of Buddhist communities to the north, northwest and east of India: Khotanese, Chinese, Sogdian and Tibetan. This translation work took place over the course of the fifth through tenth centuries ce.¹ There are no known commentaries on the Saṅghāta, but the sūtra is mentioned by name and quoted by the Indian paṇḍit Abhayāragupta in his twelfth-century com

Historical research and the presence of large numbers of manuscripts indicate that the Saṅghāta was a particularly important text for Buddhist communities in the northwest of India and central Asia until at least the eighth century.

It is unclear why or exactly when the *Saṅghāta* slipped out of view. Some time early in the second millennium, the original Sanskrit was lost altogether. Translations were preserved in the Tibetan and Chinese canons, and fragments of translations also survived in a number of central Asian languages. For many centuries, the *Saṅghāta* sat silently in these canonical collections, preserved in physical form, but unread, unrecited, and uncelebrated.

The first step in the chain of events that brought the *Saṅghāta* back into active circulation took place in the 1930s, in the very northernmost reaches of Pakistan. Villagers living in a dry and mountainous place called Gilgit stumbled across a buried stupa housing a collection of Sanskrit manuscripts written on fragile and crumbling birch-bark scrolls. At first, the villagers left the stupa undisturbed, recognizing its sacred nature.

However, when some very ancient manuscripts began to appear for sale in nearby markets, the British colonial administrators of the area took notice, investigated the source, and ordered an archeological excavation of the stupa site. The excavation revealed a cache of Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures that rocked the world of Buddhist scholars. Included in this priceless collection were Sanskrit versions of many of the best known scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism – the Diamond Cutter Sutra, the Eight-Thousand Verse Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, and the Lotus Sutra. But of all the texts preserved in this stupa, excavators found more copies of the *Saṅghāta Sūtra* than of any other text. The dates of these manuscripts indicate that the *Saṅghāta* held a crucial place in the hearts and practice of Buddhists over the course of many centuries.

After the manuscripts were unearthed, Western scholars began studying the previously lost Sanskrit version. A German scholar named Oskar von Hinüber prepared a critical edition of those manuscripts, and based on that an edition of the *Saṅghāta Sūtra* was later published by Giotto Canevascini, a European scholar specializing in linguistic analysis of Buddhist texts. Then, in the 1990s, while American scholars Karen Derris and Ed Murphy were graduate students at Harvard,

Murphy presented a copy of the text to their professor, Charles Hallisey. Professor Hallisey in turn assigned it to a class attended by an American Buddhist nun named Damchö, who prepared the translation you now have in your hands.

In the summer of 2002, that nun was fortunate enough to be able to offer a copy of the text to Lama Zopa Rinpoche. The very first day Rinpoche read the text, Rinpoche made a commitment to write the entire *Saṅghāta Sūtra* by hand in gold, and decided to place this handwritten text in the 500-foot Maitreya statue being built in India. Rinpoche also decided to have the *Saṅghāta* translated into many languages. Since that day, at Rinpoche's urging, the *Saṅghāta Sūtra* has indeed been translated into English, French, Spanish, Italian, Vietnamese, and Japanese.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche sought out the oral transmission of the text, and received it from Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche in August, 2003. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has since passed that transmission on to students worldwide. Rinpoche has commissioned translations of the text, sponsored hundreds of copies, assigned recitation of the *Saṅghāta Sūtra* as a weekly practice, and requested thousands of recitations of the text for various purposes – including on the anniversary of September 11, and for victims of the tsunami in 2004. It is precisely Rinpoche's loving concern for his students and for sentient beings that has propelled the *Saṅghāta Sūtra* back into an important position in the lives of many Buddhist practitioners.

The story of the *Saṅghāta* begins with the fullness of the Buddha's compassion for all of us sentient beings, for whom the teaching was first left in the world. Later, through the painstaking effort and loving care of generations of practitioners, reciters, scribes, and translators, the presence of the *Saṅghāta* in the world was preserved over the many centuries that separate us from the first moment of its utterance. For a time, it lay dormant in the canons in only its physical form, until the interest of academic scholars drew attention to the sūtra's content. Most recently, it has been the transformational involvement of Lama Zopa Rinpoche that has brought this wondrous text

back into the light of day and into the light of so many practitioners' hearts.

Endnote:

- 1 The very first translation that we know of was from Sanskrit into Khotanese sometime before the middle of the fifth century. The Saṅghāta Sūtra was translated into Chinese from Sanskrit twice, first by an Indian prince named Upaśūnya in the sixth century ce, and then again around the end of the tenth century by Danapāla, a prolific translator from India working in China. The Saṅghāta was translated into Tibetan in the ninth century ce.

Appendix B

Guide to Reciting the Sanghāta Sutra

When we recite this text, we are offering our bodies to allow the Sanghāta Sutra to manifest in the world in its fullest form: as physical sound, as verbal expression and as mental content.

Reciting the Sanghāta Sutra can be seen as an offering to Buddha and to the Sanghāta itself, as a form of purification, and as a way to bring all the benefits of the sutra to ourselves and to others who may be within earshot. The Sanghāta Sutra can be recited any time and any place, but following some basic guidelines can help make the activity more beneficial and enjoyable.

Some Basic Guidelines

The Sanghāta Sutra can be recited in any language. (It is currently available in eleven languages, with more on the way.)

There is no prerequisite for reciting. No initiation, transmission, teachings or permission are required. Anyone can recite at any time.

Recite out loud. The idea in reciting is to reproduce the sutra with our body, speech and mind. For that, reciting requires us to use our vocal chords, even if we recite quietly. However, it is especially important for the sound to be audible if pets or other animals are within earshot. The sutra itself describes vast benefits received by those whose ear the sutra reaches, even without understanding. Lama Zopa Rinpoche explains, “If you don’t read the sutra out loud,

then you're cheating yourself and missing the chance to create the merit of speech."

It is good to place your palms together in prostration while reciting, as you might if Buddha were present addressing you directly. This is especially beneficial to do at those points where the Saṅghāta describes the benefits of placing palms together in prostration to the Saṅghāta.

People usually find it most effective to recite the sūtra all at once, rather than doing partial recitations or dividing the recitation into different sessions. However, since there are tremendous benefits to reciting even one verse from the Saṅghāta, when it is not possible to do complete recitations, it is still extremely beneficial to recite when one can, as many pages as one can at each time.

Many people who have recited with others report they find this more powerful than reciting alone. Indeed, the merit generated by group activities far outweighs the merit we can generate individually. When we join with others in positive activities, we all share in the larger pool of merit created through the group action. Thus reciting with friends (or strangers, or 'enemies'!) is highly recommended.

Basic Practice for Reciting (or Reading)

There are specific ways to set the motivation when reciting sūtras, and there are also general ways to motivate for any virtuous practice. First, the general: Before you begin reciting, sit quietly, settle your mind, and then let your heart fill with love and compassion towards all other sentient beings. With a wish to be able to offer them all that would bring them peace and lasting happiness, and to take away all their sufferings, make a determination to dedicate your recitation to developing the inner qualities to allow you to do that.

Next, these three contemplations are recommended for whenever you recite teachings of the Buddha in the Mahāyāna tradition:

1. Think that you are reciting the Saṅghāta to all the beings in the place where you are, and also to all the beings in the six realms. In fact, we are always surrounded by others, so you can extend your thoughts to all those in the surrounding areas, countries and continents, and visualize that you are reciting directly to them, for their benefit.
2. Think that you are receiving the words directly from the Buddha. Use your imagination to generate a strong sense that the Buddha is actually teaching you the sūtra directly.
3. Think that as you hear each word recited, the meaning is actualized in your mind and you gain perfect understanding.

Begin by generating these visualizations, and then as you recite, from time to time you can silently refresh the visualizations.

Colophon:

This guide to recitation was taken from www.sanghatasutra.net. Reprinted with permission. See next section for a more extensive version of this practice from Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Appendix C

Extensive Practice for Reciting or Reading the Saṅghāta

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has outlined the following extensive practice, which can be done when either reciting or reading the holy Arya Saṅghāta Sūtra.

Before reciting or reading:

Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhichitta

I go for refuge until I am enlightened
To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.
By my practice of giving and other perfections,
May I become a buddha to benefit all sentient beings. (3x)

Seven-Limb Prayer

Reverently, I prostrate with my body, speech, and mind;
I present clouds of every type of offering, actual and imagined;
I declare all my negative actions accumulated since beginningless time
And rejoice in the merit of all holy and ordinary beings.
Please, remain until the end of cyclic existence
And turn the wheel of Dharma for living beings.
I dedicate my own merits and those of all others to the great
enlightenment.

Short Mandala Offering

This ground, anointed with perfume, strewn with flowers,
Adorned with Mount Meru, four continents, the sun and the moon:
I imagine this as a buddha-field and offer it.
May all living beings enjoy this pure land!

Special Request for the Three Great Purposes

I prostrate and go for refuge to the guru and the Three Precious Gems:
Please bless my mind. I am requesting you to immediately pacify all
the wrong conceptions, from incorrect devotion to the guru up to the
subtle dual view of the white, red, and dark visions, that exist in my
mind and in the minds of all mother sentient beings.

I am requesting you to immediately generate all the right realizations
from guru devotion up to enlightenment in my mind and in the
minds of all mother sentient beings.

I am requesting you to pacify all outer and inner obstacles to actual-
izing the entire graduated path to enlightenment in my mind and in
the minds of all mother sentient beings. (3x)

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAMI

Then recite this mantra to multiply the merit of reciting the sūtra to
multiply the merit by a million:

TAYATHA OM DHARE DHARE BENDHARE SVAHA (7x)

While reciting or reading the sūtra:

There are two ways to visualize while reading sūtras, and both can be
done at the same time:

Visualize that Buddha is giving you the teaching directly while you read the sūtra, and you actualize realizations in your heart while you are reciting.

When reciting, visualize that you are giving the teachings to sentient beings as you read the sūtra out loud. Since dogs, cats, birds, spirits, and other beings can hear you as you recite, you can invite the spirits and devas to listen as well. The sūtra is medicine for the mind's delusions, where all sufferings come from. When you read the sūtra, visualize that you are giving teachings to the beings of all six realms, offering them the opportunity to actualize the path and be liberated from their delusions, defilements, karma and suffering.

As you recite or read, and when you have finished, visualize that you and all beings – the hell beings, animals and so on – are purified by unfathomable numbers of nectar beams coming from unfathomable numbers of bodhisattvas. On this basis, visualize clearly that you and all the beings receiving teachings are generating extraordinary bliss and emptiness.

After you finish:

When you finish reading the sūtra, visualize that the sentient beings you have been reciting the sūtra to are all liberated from the causes of suffering. Their causes of delusions are purified, and they all become enlightened.

Dedicate the merit, and then rejoice! Reciting sūtras for these extensive benefits is how the bodhisattva Samantabhadra practiced, using extensive visualizations.

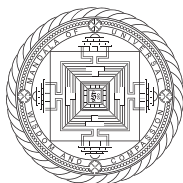
Colophon:

These instructions come from Lama Zopa Rinpoche, as explained to Venerable Thubten Wongmo in February of 2005. They were edited for publication at www.sanghatasutra.net. Used with permission.

May the kindness of the Buddha, as embodied within this wondrous sutra, fill the hearts of all beings and turn them all to virtue. Just as this Sanghāta Sutra has existed for many centuries until now in the world only to benefit, may the Buddhadharma remain for eons more, to bring comfort and aid to all.

May the supreme jewel bodhichitta
That has not arisen, arise and grow;
And may that which has arisen not diminish,
But increase more and more.

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The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) is a dynamic worldwide organization devoted to education and public service. Established by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, FPMT touches the lives of beings all over the world. In the early 1970s, young Westerners inspired by the intelligence and practicality of the Buddhist approach made contact with these lamas in Nepal and the organization was born. Now encompassing over 150 Dharma centers, projects, social services and publishing houses in thirty-three countries, we continue to bring the enlightened message of compassion, wisdom, and peace to the world.

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